

BISCAYNE

February 2013

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Volume 10 Issue 12

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What would you pay for gourmet vegan?
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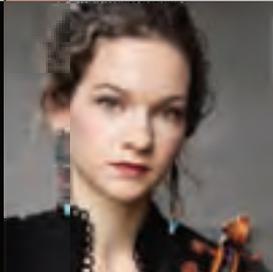
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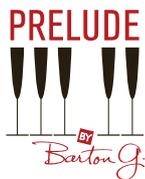
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <p>CALYPSO ROSE FEB. 9</p>	 <p>HILARY HAHN FEB. 14</p>	 <p>ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER</p>	<p>1 The Cleveland Orchestra: Berlioz & Beethoven 8 PM  Florida Grand Opera: <i>The Magic Flute</i> 8 PM </p>	<p>2 FREE Tour 12 PM  The Cleveland Orchestra: Berlioz & Beethoven 8 PM  Mark Nadler 8 PM </p>		
			<p>5 Florida Grand Opera: <i>The Magic Flute</i> 8 PM  <i>Die zauberflöte</i> (The <i>Magic Flute</i>), Mozart's masterpiece, reveals some of opera's most beloved characters as they play out the timeless drama of good versus evil.</p>	<p>7 The Philadelphia Orchestra: <i>The Emperor Concerto</i> 8 PM  Beethoven's magnificent piece features acclaimed pianist André Watts.</p>	<p>8 Augusto Soledade Brazzdance 7:30 PM  "A combination of wildness and precision!" <i>The Miami Herald</i></p>	<p>9 FREE Tour 12 PM  Florida Grand Opera: <i>La sonnambula</i> 7 PM  Augusto Soledade Brazzdance 7:30 PM  Calypso Rose 8:30 PM </p>
<p>10 Florida Grand Opera: <i>The Magic Flute</i> 2 PM  Come and experience one of the world's most frequently performed operas!</p>	<p>TICKETS MAKE GREAT VALENTINE'S DAY GIFTS! </p>	<p>12 Florida Grand Opera: <i>La sonnambula</i> 8 PM  Mozart's operatic masterpiece with its harmonic structure is sure to be a delight.</p>	 <p>FEB. 21-24</p>	<p>14 Hilary Hahn 8 PM  Celebrate the most romantic day of the year with one of the most sought-after Grammy-winning violinists of our time!</p>	<p>15 Ayikodans 25th Anniversary 7:30 PM  Monk & Coltrane 8 PM  Florida Grand Opera: <i>La sonnambula</i> 8 PM </p>	<p>16 FREE Tour 12 PM  Ayikodans 25th Anniversary 2 & 7:30 PM  Florida Grand Opera: <i>The Magic Flute</i> 8 PM </p>
<p>17 Florida Grand Opera: <i>La sonnambula</i> 2 PM  FREE Gospel Sundays - Dorothy Norwood 4 PM  Ayikodans 25th Anniversary 5 PM </p>	 <p>Feb. 26 - March 3 Les Misérables</p>	<p>21 Alvin Ailey 8 PM  "Every American owes it to him or herself to see the Ailey [company] perform <i>Revelations</i>." -Oprah Winfrey on <i>Entertainment Tonight</i>, 12/4/08</p>		<p>22 Alvin Ailey 8 PM  Artistic Director and Miami native Robert Battle continues to surprise and delight audiences, adding dynamic choreographic voices to the repertoire that stretch Ailey's extraordinary artists in new ways!</p>	<p>23 FREE Tour 12 PM  Alvin Ailey 2 & 8 PM  "You don't just see an Ailey performance, you feel it!" <i>Essence Magazine</i></p>	
<p>24 Alvin Ailey 2 PM  Don't miss one of the world's most popular dance companies perform as they return to the Ziff Ballet Opera House stage!</p>		<p>FREE TOURS MONDAYS AND SATURDAYS AT NOON! Your Backstage Pass to the Adrienne Arsht Center!</p>	<p>26 Les Misérables 8 PM  <i>The New York Times</i> calls this production of <i>Les Misérables</i> "an unquestionably spectacular production from start to finish!"</p>	<p>27 Les Misérables 8 PM  "This new production actually exceeds the original. The storytelling is clearer, the perspective grittier and the motivations more honest. Musical theatre fans can rejoice: 'Les Miz' is born again." <i>NY1-TV</i></p>	<p>28 Les Misérables 8 PM  "A dynamically re-imagined hit. This 'Les Misérables' has improved with age." <i>The Star-Ledger</i></p>	 <p>Feb. 15-17 AYIKODANS</p>

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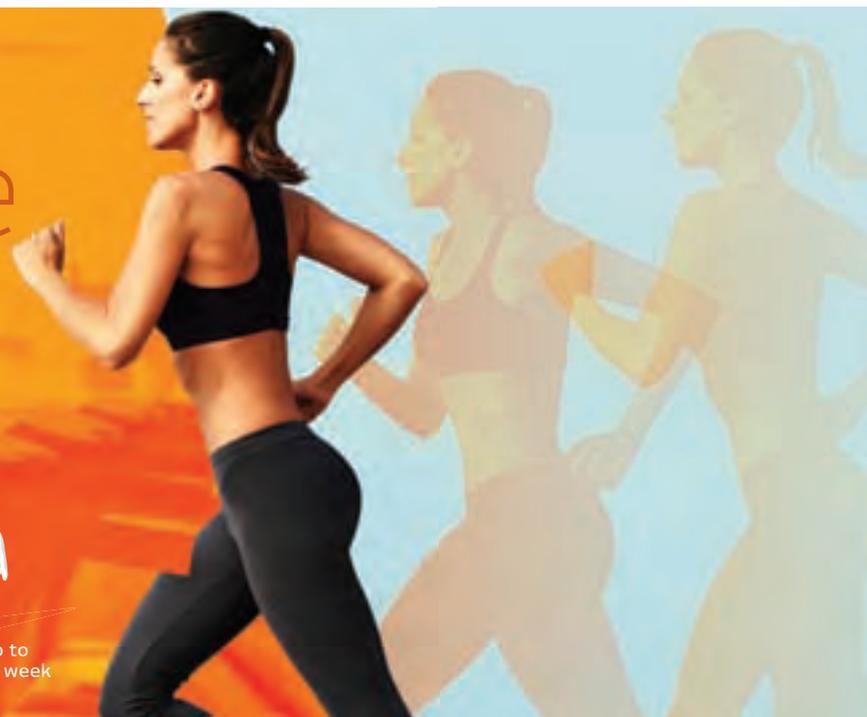
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BISCAYNE *Times*

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Commentary: LETTERS

Horrors: About as Credible as the Kardashians

As a 34-year resident of Eastern Shores, and one who has been continually involved in the community, I have never heard the word “hate” used in any reference to Eastern Shores or its residents, until I read Jim W. Harper’s “Little Park of Horrors” (January 2013).

The author used the word “hate” eight times in his “Park Patrol” article to describe his perception of the Eastern Shores community with regard to children, pedestrians, parks, and of course, the Kardashians.

At this point, the only thing I hate is his article, which I find offensive, unfair, and as credible as the Kardashians.

*Chuck Asarnow, president
Eastern Shores Property Owners
Association*

Horrors: You’re A World Traveler and This Is the Worst You’ve Seen?

To Jim W. Harper: Good grief, man! Your article seems a bit over the top. Reporters like you and the Kardashians may be hated, but I’m sure the residents of Eastern Shores don’t hate children.

Perhaps the residents prefer to keep their children on the safe side of the guard gates, with all the comfort and safety of those luxurious homes overlooking the lovely canals.

Or perhaps there are not many small children who would use the lot? Did you actually interview any of the alleged baby haters? I’m sure our residents and council people would encourage the City of North Miami Beach to spruce it up if the 4000 residents of Eastern Shores had a problem with it.

I did a little research myself and can see you are a well-educated and worldly individual who has traveled six continents. And this is the worst thing you’ve ever seen?

Perhaps you should aim your rants at something affecting millions of people. Or maybe the horror the constant decline of customer service by local businesses, or the overwhelming traffic conditions during the holiday season.

*Janet Masumian
Eastern Shores*

Kent to Jack: Beware Nazis Passing as Liberals

Jack King’s commentary “Locked and Loaded,” in January’s edition of *Biscayne Times*, really came as no surprise,

and considering your publication’s liberal-leaning slant of late, was really quite predictable.

The only rational assumption he made in the column, which I fully agree with, is the fact that most if not all Americans, irrespective of their positions on gun ownership, are thoroughly shocked and disgusted with what happened at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I would venture to say that Wayne LaPierre of the NRA feels exactly the same way.

However, for the less-than-objective folks in the mainstream media these days, Mr. King included, it is always easier to jump to quick conclusions and hop on the politically correct bandwagon, focusing on that which seems to be the most tangible cause, in this case “guns,” rather than address the intangible or the root cause of the problem, which is a culture raised and inspired by a steady diet of violence on TV, film, and video gaming.

Factor in single-working-parent homes, broken families, lack of moral and formative values, and a steady diet of pharmaceuticals to treat depression and a slew of other mental illnesses, real or imagined, and the end result is what happened at Sandy Hook.

Those of us who are in fact responsible, licensed gun owners aren’t the ones out there committing the crimes. It is the criminal or, in this case, a mentally deranged individual, using illegally obtained guns to commit the crime, and who I am guessing would be less inclined to do so if they suspected they were confronting someone with a gun.

This is precisely why most such crimes occur in states with gun laws already in place, since it is unlikely the intended victim(s) will be armed.

While I do believe certain gun-law loopholes need to be closed to mitigate the opportunity for felons or the mentally ill from obtaining weapons directly or indirectly, I suspect, as with most legislation coming out of Washington these days, that it will likely be the responsible gun owners who will end up suffering the unintended or perhaps intended consequences of whatever is signed into law. After all, it’s much easier to go after and make it harder for registered gun owners than dedicate the resources to go after unregistered weapons in the hands of criminals and other undesirables.

If there is any one thing that has established this great country for what it is, it is the Constitution on which it

Continued on page 14



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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 12

was founded. It appears, though, that Mr. King defines anyone who defends the Constitution as a right-wing neo-Nazi, a label I believe would apply to a majority of Americans who still value and cherish the freedoms for which it stands.

I suggest that, before putting pen to paper again, Mr. King read up on the rise of national socialism in pre-war Germany, for I believe he will find many similar parallels to the liberal-progressive movement taking root in the U.S. at the moment. National socialism gave rise to Nazism, which is on par with the eventual evolution of the progressive movement and its agenda, which is gearing more and more toward silencing opposing opinions and infringing on people's rights and beliefs.

*Kent O. Bonde
Miami Shores*

Honor the *Miami Herald's* Journalists, Not Their Masters

With respect to Erik Bojnansky's excellent article on "Historic Monument or Monumentally Ugly" (December 2012), I can't imagine what Miami did in the first place to deserve the Miami Herald building on its bayfront.

Nor can I think of another newspaper building — not in Seattle, Boston, San Francisco, San Diego, Chicago, Cleveland, Baltimore, or Tampa — that has gunked up and blocked off its city's waterfront views. A monument to the *Herald* is what the Herald building is.

The *Miami Herald's* legacy, by the way, is in its people. Honor them, but don't memorialize the building or thank its masters, who, if you'll recall, paid \$4.5 billion for Knight Ridder — way, way too much.

With McClatchy stock now at just \$3 a share on a good day, the corporate bean counters apparently decided if they couldn't make back their money from the *Herald*, they'd at least sell the floor out from under it — and to Genting, even though commercial gambling isn't yet legal in Florida under any conditions that would be of interest to the consortium.

The *Herald* is no victim here. Its editorial-page writers display shameless cynicism, maintaining they have no dog in this fight even as they praise the city for rejecting historical designation. The impure motives, they say, lie with the heritage-designation supporters, incited more by antipathy toward a "mega resort" than by preservation advocacy.

Frankly, bravo to the preservationists if their actions make city planners pause for a moment and give more thought to a massive development project that will reshape the downtown area permanently, and whose owners are keen on bringing in Vegas-style casino gambling.

Those same city planners will be babes in the woods when they face Genting's powerful political and financial lobbying efforts. Be careful what you wish for, Miami; you won't be able to undo it.

Newspapers have always served their owners' interests. But owners used to be local and they had to face their neighbors every day, and their interests used to be plain for all to see.

Let the "local" daily limp off into the sunset out there beyond MIA, and bring back true civic journalism.

*Carmen Delgado
North Miami*

Correction

In Erik Bojnansky's cover story "Checking In, Checking Out" (January 2013), the name of the Shalimar Motel's owner was misspelled. The correct spelling is Tikva Gluck.

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Tom Wolfe Waits, and Waits

The latest, greatest (Varoom! Varoom!) Miami novel, and why I can't read it

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

I can't do it. I planned to do it. I tried to do it. I told myself I *had* to do it. But I just can't do it. I can't bring myself to pick up Tom Wolfe's *Back to Blood*.

When it was published this past October, it was supposed to be the definitive Miami novel, or at least the definitive take on contemporary Miami. It was reviewed in virtually every major publication; Wolfe himself was feted at the Miami Book Fair International; and everyone in town said the same thing: "You simply must read it!" (Even if it wasn't clear they had, or would.)

The novel quickly became, in this event-driven town, another event. Three months later the stakes have been pulled up and the big top is gone. All that remains is the book, all 700 pages of it. And I can't think of a reason to crack it open.

It's not that I don't appreciate Wolfe's work, in particular his contributions to the rise of New Journalism, a style of reporting that utilized the techniques of fiction to arrive at larger truths about the subject at hand, and the culture.

Beginning with groundbreaking magazine features like "There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby Around the Bend," about the California custom-car scene, through *The Electric*

Kool-Aid Acid Test, his book-length look at novelist and LSD guru Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, and "Radical Chic," on the complicated marriage between wealthy white liberals and black revolutionaries, Wolfe seemed to have more than a finger on the pulse of America in the 1960s and 1970s. At his best, he not only captured the culture, but skewered it, too, revealing — and reveling in — its contradictions.

Then, in the late 1980s, Wolfe took the plunge, crossing over from a cultural observer who utilized novelistic technique to a full-fledged novelist, with *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, about a New York where excess ruled. That was followed in 1998 by *A Man in Full*, set in Atlanta, and now *Back to Blood*. (There was also *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, Wolfe's foray into American college life, but nobody talks about that one anymore.)

The throughline in all three books is the idea of the city as a boiling cauldron of class and racial tension. In *Back to Blood*, the idea, quoted in reviews, is neatly expressed by Wolfe's fictional Miami mayor, who tells his police chief: "You got to realize one thing first of all. In Miami, everybody hates everybody." Indeed, the very title of the book refers to the tribalism of the modern metropolis, rooted, in Wolfe's view, in bloodlines.

And therein lies my problem with Wolfe as novelist. Taken together, his big



Photo courtesy of A Gentleman in the Sun Productions

urban novels can too often seem like the B-movies of the 1940s — the same story starring the same actors shot on the same lot, only with different backgrounds; just swap out the Empire State Building for the Freedom Tower.

It doesn't help that Wolfe himself has never voiced much faith in the novel as a form. This is, after all, a man who in October pointedly told *New York* magazine that *nonfiction* is the highpoint of 20th-century writing.

Illustrative of this lack of faith is a scene from the documentary *Tom Wolfe Gets Back to Blood*, which follows Wolfe as he researches Miami for his book. In one scene, the writer is seen studying the location of a particular bridge near downtown.

When asked why he is so fixated on the structure, Wolfe says, essentially, that he wants to get it right, because a novelist "just can't put a bridge anywhere he wants." To which one might naturally respond, "Well, if a novelist can't, *who* can?" (This inherent tension in Wolfe — the reporter struggling with the novelist — is just one of many potentially interesting elements the film fails to unpack.)

Wolfe's distrust of the novel engenders, for me anyway, a certain distrust of Wolfe as a novelist. And that was *before* I heard the line about Miami as a place where everybody hates everybody. The concept struck me as hopelessly anachronistic. Everybody hating everybody was Miami in the 1980s. These days, the dominant sentiment, if there is one, is indifference. Like in most big cities. (Call it progress, I suppose.)

All of which explains why I haven't read *Back to Blood*, instead using my time to read two other recent novels set in Florida, C.C. Radoff's satirical *The Big Split*, about a coming Red State-Blue State civil war, and Thomas Sanchez's compact, compelling eco-thriller *American Tropic*, about a serial killer loose in the Keys. I recommend both.

I wouldn't say Wolfe has lost me as a reader, though. If anything, all the hype over *Back to Blood* has me itching to revisit his earlier work, when truth, to Wolfe, wielded more power than fiction — and he didn't feel the need to pretend otherwise.

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The GOP's Boy Toy

Marco Rubio may not know it (may *never* know it), but he's being duped

By Jack King
BT Contributor

Over the past 30 years, the State of Florida has had some very good U.S. Senators. Most did a great job for both Florida and the country as a whole. People like Claude Pepper, George Smathers, Lawton Chiles, Bob Graham, and Bill Nelson — all of them Democrats.

Also on my good list is former Sen. Mel Martinez. He went to Washington with great expectations. But when he got there, he was treated like every other minority in the Republican Party. They take their new “boy” aside and tell him what to say and how to vote. When Martinez didn't go along with the leadership, he was given crap committee assignments and was cut out of most meaningful discussions.

Martinez was so disgusted with the system that he resigned after four years. Think about that. A Republican with morals!

Now we have Sen. Marco Rubio, our wonderful boy senator from West Miami, who is falling into the same trap that ran Martinez out of Washington, only Rubio hasn't figured it out yet. And with his brilliant intellect, he may *never* figure it out.

Rubio has been held up as a potential 2016 challenger for the White House. The reality is that the Republican Party has no intention of letting Rubio even get close to the nomination. They just want him out there to show the country that

the party has some minority faces.

Even more troubling in this weird scenario: Rubio isn't exactly the brightest bulb on the tree. His record in the Florida legislature is spotty at best. Mostly he was one of the leaders who tried to privatize all state functions (started by Jeb Bush), and for the most part it's been a disaster.

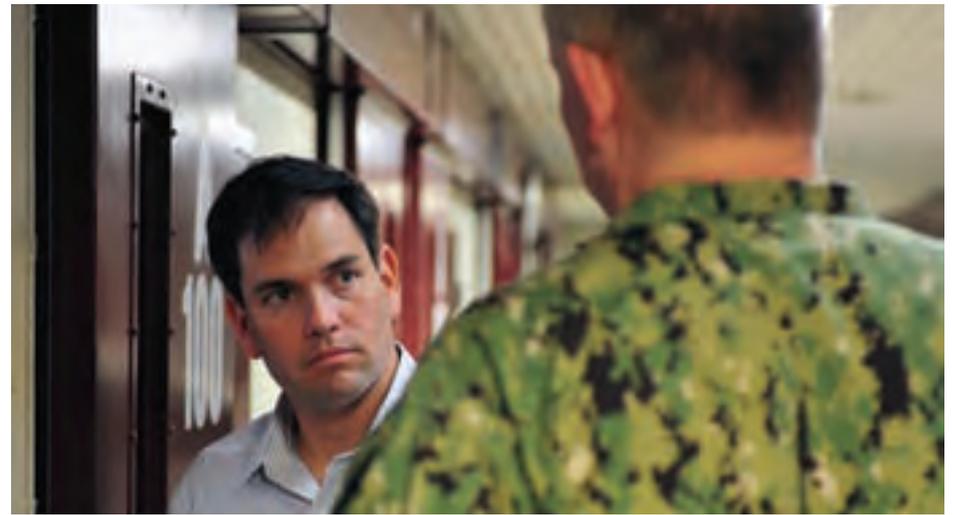
Rubio's most memorable moment as a state legislator was taking the Florida Republican Party's AmEx card and, along with his best buddy David Rivera, burning the numbers off it for their personal expenses. Now *that's* what I call living within your means!

The Republican leadership in the U.S. Senate put Rubio on the Foreign Relations Committee. I have no idea why. He has zero experience in foreign affairs. Could it possibly be his Hispanic surname?

So in his first major foreign policy outing, he gets to ask Secretary of State Hillary Clinton questions (er, a question) about the Benghazi attack. It went something like this:

Rubio: Before the attack in Benghazi, what had we done specifically to help them build their security capacities?

Clinton: Well there's a long list and I'll be happy to provide that to you because it is filled with training, with equipment, with the kind of planning that they had not done before, and I'd be happy to send you the detail on that, senator.



That's it? He spoke for eight seconds and that's all he could say? My best guess is that his Republican handlers gave him a softball question so he wouldn't make a fool of himself. Hell, he could have just sent a memo asking for the information. But then he wouldn't have had a chance to get his mug on television.

For the past few months we've heard that Rubio is working on a comprehensive and sweeping package of immigration reforms. So far we've heard only generalizations about the package. Nobody knows any specifics. Ah yes, it is difficult to criticize someone's policy if you have only a vague idea what it is.

My take on what his “sweeping” immigration reforms will look like: Nobody else can come in to the United States unless you come with \$10 million to invest, a doctorate degree, and look like a Republican. Oh yes, you can be Hispanic as long as you're still white.

As for the 11 million people already here illegally: You can stay here, pay taxes, donate to my campaign, and keep your nose clean. However, becoming a citizen will take 50 years. In other words, stay, work, make this country great, and then die. Thank you.

In closing, here are a few more choice Rubioisms:

- Rubio does not support background checks for gun purchases.
- His religion is Catholic. No wait, Mormon. No wait, Protestant.
- He says that after 11 years, we're leaving Afghanistan “too fast.”
- He voted against hurricane relief for Sandy victims. (Sure hope we don't have another bad storm in Florida.)
- His “100 Bright Ideas to Fix Florida” did little to help Florida, but made his friends, including Jeb Bush, lots of money.
- Do you collect Social Security? What about unemployment insurance? Rubio thinks you're lazy.
- He voted against reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act.
- He secured \$20 million for a hospital, then got hired by the hospital at \$8000 per month.

There are so many more, but it's beginning to make me sick. I'm going to have revise my definition of the word “conservative.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Plant Now, Pay Later

Get lazy with an urban garden and you'll reap nothing but regret

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

My mom has a green thumb that I didn't inherit. Or rather I should say, she possesses an unwavering dedication to gardening, while mine waxes and wanes.

Our family home in suburban Pittsburgh has long been a stop on the local garden tour. Each spring as the snow and ice trickled away, hundreds of tulips would raise their bulbous heads, presenting themselves to the local deer population like a great Technicolor buffet. And every morning we found dozens of them decapitated.

Mom quit on tulips after that.

But the rest of the yard, front and back, is still an ever-changing array of bold hues and textures that stops people — and the odd deer — in their tracks. Every summer day, right through until fall, she's in the yard watering, or on her knees working the earth with her hands to briefly give life to this achingly beautiful display. To care deeply for something you know won't last is the definition of passion.

My first roommate in Edgewater was an urbane medical student named Johnny. We bonded over taste beyond our means, and he also had a way with plants. Tall, leafy bamboo shaded the couch while mangrove shoots sprang roots in water-filled mason jars atop the windowsill. The balcony was a clutter

of aloe, ferns, rescued street buds, and a dozen other beautiful, nameless species.

He once scalped a pineapple and embedded it in soil. Two years later, one lone little fruit emerged from the center of two-foot green spikes. We cut it up and soaked it in some nice vodka for two days, serving the flavored spirit and liquored chunks to a few lucky friends.

At one point Johnny and I had about 30 plants, which I took far too much credit for when I assembled photos of them into a little book for my mother's birthday, thanking her for *my* green thumb. What I probably meant was: "Thanks for helping me appreciate plants."

Johnny moved out and, over the next two years, I murdered everything he left. The corner of the balcony became a dusty cemetery of pots that did little more than take on rainwater and endure abuse from my cat.

This past summer I marched to Home Depot, committed to bringing the garden back to its former glory. I bought soil and seeds: tomatoes, Thai basil, oregano, cilantro, carrots, poppies, and more. Things really started off well. The passion was there and, each day, I watered and pruned and plucked, caring for the plants like defenseless children, proudly posting each new millimeter of growth on Instagram.

Two guys from work had their own gardens going — one in a Normandy Isle yard, another on the roof of an apartment building in the Upper Eastside. We'd



In gardening, as in life, you have to restart somewhere.

compare pictures and bring the fruits of our labor in for lunch.

These two were having wild success. The apartment rooftop was yielding fragrant basil and fluffy arugula. He found an old door and boxed in the sides, creating a shallow and wide growing area that worked like a charm. Tomatoes sprang out of five-gallon buckets; the arugula lived happily in an old desk drawer beneath a screen to keep the birds at bay. The garden over on Normandy Isle spat out cherry tomatoes, jalapeños, cayenne green peppers, salad greens, mint, thyme, rosemary, green onions, sunflower, and oregano like it was nothing.

After managing to shear two crops of basil, I grew lazy and impatient. Work got busy. I developed a gym habit and other nightly commitments. The DVR was filling up, calling to me. Life got in the way, and the fantasy of an urban vegetable garden began to quietly shrivel.

I either overwatered the tomatoes, or watered them too little. We'll never know. Besides, like the carrots, they were planted too close to one another, and the battle for resources dragged

them into what I imagine was a version of veggie cannibalism. Their entangled stems withered next to yellowing cilantro and, from the couch, I lost hope, drawing down the shades and refusing to visit the balcony. I blamed my growing neglect on the plants' unwillingness to live.

But the truth is, I never actually read up on how to garden, choosing instead to go about it "my way." I'm the kind of person who has to take apart an Ikea bookcase halfway through because I didn't read the instructions, and whose partner doles out driving tips like, "Whichever way your gut tells you to turn, do the opposite."

Right now the basil is hanging on for dear life, and the rest of the "garden" is a series of dirt-filled pots that the cat again has his eye on. But by the spring I'll regroup, if only to prove that I can overcome an aversion to the three things that seem most essential to a successful garden: patience, discipline, and respect for the rules.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Foot Soldiers

Pedestrian activists launch a campaign to reclaim Miami's crosswalks, one intersection at a time

By Adam Schachner
Special to the BT

Miamians rarely find common ground on most topics. Even more rare are public demonstrations of any kind. Collectively speaking, we'd much rather spend our time at the mall or the beach. Which makes what recently happened at a Brickell intersection all the more powerful.

Responding to an outcry for proper roadway conduct, on Monday, January 21, no fewer than 25 concerned locals declared the crosswalks at Brickell Avenue and SE 15th Road a "pedestrian safety walk zone." Marchers occupied the crosswalks and demanded increased civility from motorists. They even distributed booklets on Florida's traffic laws to drivers, many of whom, because they lack civility, simply flung the booklets back at the activists with a curse and a rude gesture.

Still, the walkers asserted their rights to safety, braved hostile stares and abuse, and celebrated the motorists who gave approving honks and thumbs-up.

The takeaway? Conscientious drivers, concerned about who might be hurt by their carelessness, do exist in Miami, but they are in the minority, spread thin through the ranks of traffic, and pressured to keep moving by honking tailgaters.

We complain that road rage and recklessness are responsible for our reputation as a car-filled catastrophe. At the same time, we dismiss the issue with grim humor, shrugging off "Miami drivers" as

a local quirk with which we must cope.

Our inside joke deflates when the incident numbers show Miami's dangerous reality. The region is a hub for hit-and-runs, crashes, and irresponsibility behind the wheel. As one safety walker's sign stated, South Florida tallied a staggering "8080 injured or dead" in crashes involving pedestrians between 2005 and 2009, according to a study available at www.dadehealth.org.

That ranks Miami as the fourth most dangerous city in America for pedestrians. Florida, meanwhile, is number one in avoidable traffic fatalities and injuries. Few would deny our streets are a nightmare of ill-informed and uncaring drivers.

Enter the pedestrian safety walk, created by Elsa Roberts, a local activist engaged in community-building efforts, including transit and commuter advocacy. A bicycle commuter who frequents downtown, she shares concerns with walkers and riders competing with traffic. During her rides, she has realized that "drivers in Miami believe they have more of a right to the [road] than pedestrians. Even when pedestrians are obeying the law...they still don't have access to the roads in equal measure."

Roberts identified Brickell as a good place to demonstrate the principle of shared transit space. In choosing this intersection, she notes that a pedestrian was recently struck by a car only a block away; the driver was not ticketed or held accountable. Such occurrences, along with Brickell's widespread fitness



Photo by Philip Picaza

January 21: A show of pedestrian force in Brickell.

culture, make the area a particularly tense mix of car and foot traffic.

The Brickell march was not the first pedestrian safety walk. Roberts organized a similar demonstration this past October. That effort brought roughly half as many walkers as the Brickell action to the intersection of Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Miracle Mile in Coral Gables on a Saturday afternoon. The festive yet assertive atmosphere was the same, as marchers distributed pamphlets, cheered considerate motorists, and yelled at aggressive vehicular misfits.

Despite honking horns, curses, and even one driver's taunt to "get a job" (because anyone not driving a car in Miami couldn't possibly be employed?), the walkers claimed their space. The action, which even prompted a police response, proved effective and empowering. The summoned officer acknowledged the walkers' rights and encouraged them to continue, so long as they obeyed the law.

Reviewing the Brickell safety walk, Roberts considers the event a success. She remarks that "drivers were a lot more hostile at this intersection than [in the Gables], and a lot of cars tried to turn illegally when they were supposed to yield to pedestrians." Walkers embraced each instance energetically as a chance

to educate motorists.

Florida Department of Transportation signs throughout the Brickell intersection require drivers to wait for foot traffic to pass; the signs, for the most part, appear to have had the desired effect. A major concern, however, stemmed from drivers' tendency to overlook SE 15th Street's "No Turn on Red" sign, a habit that played a factor in selecting this intersection. (Similarly, the intersection at Ponce and Miracle Mile also sports an oft-ignored "No Turn" sign.)

Safety walks represent a creative assault on an old problem. Our city's rapid sprawl promoted an auto-centric development. Simply put, we were built for car culture. This generally means our drivers have assumed a sense of entitlement to the road at the expense of defenseless pedestrians and cyclists, often with fatal consequences.

Which is why Roberts is adamant about promoting shared transit space, possibly at a crosswalk near you: "The biggest thing that's going to make drivers who are antagonistic change their mindset — that they're the ones who have a right to occupy that space — is more actions like this, and more enforcement until the idea that cars supersede people goes away."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

When February rolls around, many think of Valentine's Day (which coincides on February 14, possibly not coincidentally, with the lesser-known International Condom Day). Others think of Presidents' Day (February 18) — all the sales that day and the holiday weekend before.

Some think of the Christian holiday Ash Wednesday (February 13 this year), the Jewish holiday Purim (February 24 this year), or other annually moving dates like Chinese New Year (February 9-15) or Super Bowl Sunday (February 3).

But one fixed February holiday Miamians never have to think about is Groundhog Day (always February 2), when our friends up north worry about whether Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil, NYC's Staten Island Chuck Chuck, and other noted regional rodents will see their shadows, insuring (with 61% accuracy, according to the National Climatic Data Center) that their miserable winter weather will continue for another six weeks.

That makes February, for Miamians, National Gloating Month. Not that we'd dream of calling up our northern friends/family members to gloat. We don't have to call. Most of them are probably down here right now, camped out in our guest rooms for the month.

Fortunately, many BT's advertisers offer lots of things to do for defrosting

escapees (and you), particularly in terms of new eating and entertainment opportunities. Sill other advertisers offer chances to restart those lofty New Year's resolutions you've likely, according to numerous national surveys, blown already.

One advertiser actually started 2013 spectacularly: **360 Furniture Consignments** (18340 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-627-3148). The company's director, Dave Widdas, reports that they've sold out their entire inventory to a film production company! That means, however, the store is in need of "beautiful and unusual furniture and accessories." Perhaps yours, if you have some high-quality gently used stuff you'd like to sell. Send photos to Dave@360Furnitureconsignments.com, or call for an appointment to have him view your entire estate.

After spending part of January "freezing our bums off" at Sundance Film Festival, the crew at Wynwood's innovative **O Cinema** (90 NW 29th St., 305-571-9970) returned to start this month, February 1-3, with South Florida's first-ever interactive film festival, Filmgate. Readers who hang out at the BT's bulk drops, waiting for copies hot off the presses, may even be in time to catch the last day of the festival, produced with partner Indie Cinema Club Miami. If the fest is already over, though, O has events later in February, including the first 2013 entry in the

cinema's popular "OMG! Dinner & A Movie" series, on 2/5. The flick, *As Luck Would Have It*, stars Selma Hayek; dinner stars multiple courses from Harry's Pizzeria, and pastry chef Hedy Goldsmith has a mid-movie treat for patrons, too. Go to www.o-cinema for more info, including menu.

At **Monsignor Edward Pace High School** (15600 NW 32nd Ave., 305-623-7223), the many celebrations offered during 2013's Catholic Schools Week ended on February 2. But much of the annual event's purpose is to remind students/prospective students and their parents of the benefits of a Catholic-school education. Pace continues doing that with an announcement from athletic director Joe Zaccaro: Three members of the school's noted football team will sign Division 1 national letters of intent on signing day, February 6. The guys are Anthony Walker Jr. (Northwestern University), Robert Jones (Northern Illinois University), and Logan Oce (Western Michigan University). Congrats, guys!

If your goals for the still-new year involve a career that will help shape the community, Miami's **Knight Foundation** (200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-908-2600) can help talented creatives, entrepreneurs, and other agents of change who have an innovative, outside-the-box idea. Grant submissions for the latest Knight Arts Challenge will be accepted February 4-March 4. Don't know how to write a grant application? Knight Foundation's very thorough website (www.KnightArts)



org) will walk you through it with advice about making your application stand out, info on past winners' ideas, live web chats, and more.

NANA isn't your grandmother, but the **Neighbors and Neighbors Association** (180 NE 62nd St., 305-756-0605). It was established in 1995 to provide assistance to small "mom and pop" businesses. Today's programs to help start-up and existing businesses in underserved communities throughout Miami-Dade County, providing grants and/or grant application assistance, advocacy or referrals, implementing economic development, and aiding small businesses with business permits and licenses, as well as help with financial record-keeping (workshops and one-on-one training in preparing daily sales systems and necessary reports). Visit www.nanafi.org for a comprehensive rundown.

Speaking of mom-and-pop businesses, unique seafood market/restaurant/lounge **Fish Fish** (13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124), opened less than two months ago by a husband/wife team, has already implemented some

Continued on page 26

<p>10108 NE 1 Ave.</p>  <p>\$649,500</p> <p>1920's two story Mediterranean gem. 5/4 + 2 car gar. 3,600 S.F. Wood Floors, fireplace, screened porch. 3 zone A/C. On Historic Register</p>	<p>1566 NE 104 St.</p>  <p>\$419,000</p> <p>Custom built 2/2 + garage located 1/2 a block from the bay. Updated baths. Large kitchen. Accordion shutters. Newer roof. Fenced yard with room for pool.</p>	<p>371 NE 103 St.</p>  <p>\$379,500</p> <p>Large 3/2, Family Room, Garage, Wood Floors. New Roof, Eat-in Kitchen. Cent. A/C. Double Lot.</p>	<p>14605 NE 3 Ct.</p>  <p>\$197,500</p> <p>Huge 3/2 on large fenced lot. Big family rm. Formal dining & living rooms. Garage. Central A/C. Over 2,300 sq. feet. Best buy in the area.</p>	 <p>DUFFY REALTY www.duffyrealty.com</p> <p>Patrick L. Duffy 305-904-4803</p>
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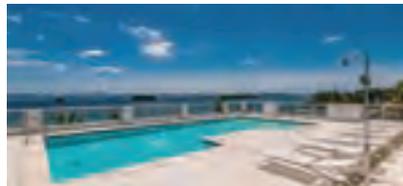
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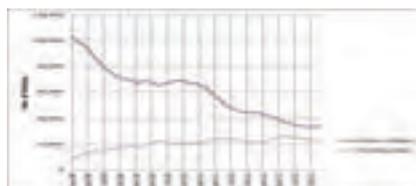
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The rapid decrease of South Florida real estate inventory has slowed down thanks to a much needed influx of new luxury condominiums. Sales volume is also slowing down but is still up 24.6% compared to the same month last year for condos, and 42% for single family homes. Condo prices have jumped 24% since October 2011!

Contact us today to secure your property purchase in the fastest recovering, most under-leveraged and most under-valued real estate market on the planet!

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Midtown multifamily building \$460,000

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BizBuzz

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terrific additions to its already ambitious concept. Thanks to market customers who were coming in early to buy fresh fish and wanting to stay on for a bite, the originally dinner-only restaurant now has lunch specials. A Monday-Friday happy hour now features \$6 bar bites. And the Saturday-night-only DJ now plays on Fridays, too. A February special: live Maine lobsters are only \$12 lb. for 1.25-1.5 pounders (less than crappy defrosted lobster tails at the supermarket) and \$18 lb. for 3-8 pound monsters other markets don't even carry.

Need an office for your business? Brian Carter at Majestic Properties (305-582-2424) has four beautiful listings at Mark Soyka's **55th Street Station** complex. Measuring 540, 670, 850, and 895 square feet, the spaces are right above the *BT*'s office (5400 NE 4th Ct.), so you'll have some mighty interesting neighbors. The Station is also home to Soyka, Andiamo Pizza, Sushi Siam, the News Lounge, and Steel Gym, among other tenants, so you'll have plenty to eat and drink, plus a place to work it off. For a private viewing, contact Ryan York at 305-776-0920.

How about some beautiful promo flyers/postcards or business cards — extra-glossy, UV-coated, thick ones for the same price as other printers' cheesy discount models? Welcome new advertiser **ClubFlyers** (2300 NW 7th Ave., 305-591-7600). Go to clubflyers.com to see the company's full line, which includes banners, CD/DVD inserts, posters, menus, more. Design your own items with the company's easy-to-use template, or use their custom designers. And this month, *BT* readers get 15% off any order with code: BISCAYNE.

No one likes to think about their kids being sick or injured. But if it happens, think of new advertiser **Miami Children's Hospital** and its brand-new Midtown Outpatient Center (3915 Biscayne Blvd., 786-624-6000). The award-winning hospital's outpost in *BT* territory offers urgent care, diagnostic services, and rehabilitation, with more services soon. For urgent care, you never need an appointment. MCH is renowned for willingness on the part of all staff to answer questions; efficiency under all conditions, crowded or no; and sensitivity to the feelings of small, vulnerable creatures — as well as their parents.

Concerned about small, vulnerable creatures that *aren't* human? The **Humane Society of Greater Miami** announces an event that both parent-type people and their kids will find gratifying: a "Walk for the Animals" fundraiser, presented by Pet Supermarket, on February 23 in downtown's Bayfront Park. Check-in is 8:30-10:00 a.m., and the one-mile stroll, which can be done either with or without a dog, is from 10:00 a.m. to noon. A \$50 donation for individual walkers, \$100 for families (up to two adults and two kids) saves abandoned animals' lives, and participants get T-shirts and goodie bags. There's also a pet adoption arena. Visit www.humanesocietymiami.org or call 305-749-1825 to register.

For walking combined with a hit of culture and considerable high style, check out **The Art Experience** (www.TheArtExperience.com). Founder/CEO Susana Baker offers unique curated art explorations in several of Miami's key artsy neighborhoods. The next one in *BT* territory, on February 9 (from 4:30-9:00 p.m.), is a Wynwood/Design District Second Saturday gallery walk with art-loving, legendary drag artist Elaine Lancaster. The \$85 per person price includes signature sparkling wines and stylish snacks. Reserve at 305-767-5000.

If you'd rather ride than walk, you can't do it at the above animal event or art galleries. But motorcyclists and scooter-riders will want to know that **Adrenaline Motorbikes**, formerly in Wynwood, has moved to 830 NE 79th Street Ride into the new location on February 9, noon to 3:00 p.m., when the shop, famed for its maintenance and repairs of all "rice-burner" makes/models, will be celebrating the move with a free BBQ-and-beer bash. If you can't ride in because your hog (or whatever scooters are nicknamed — piglets?) is busted, don't panic. Adrenaline still offers free pick-up of your bike from downtown to NE 135th Street, and east to west from SoBe to I-95.

For those who'd rather ride the waves than the streets, **Keystone Point Marina** (1950 NE 135th St., 305-940-6236), serving boaters for more than 50 years but always keeping up with state-of-the-art improvements, has big news: an awesome new forklift they've nicknamed "The Bull" (as in bull dolphin fish/mahi-mahi). Drop by the Miami Beach Convention Center during the upcoming Miami Boat Show, 2/14-2/18, to see the

boat-handling machine on display at the Wiggins Forklift booth.

If golfing is your athletic activity of choice (or shopping for a golfer), welcome new advertiser **Palm Beach Golf Center**, whose just-opened third location, luckily, is located not way up north in Palm Beach but at 14791 Biscayne Blvd. (305-949-7030). The store contains the largest selection of golf products in town — *thousands* of products, and all the most popular brands.

Whew. All that walking, scooting, boating, and golfing — or rather, thinking about it — has made us hungry. Which means the ultimate on-the-go food: pizza. And you can score both huge whole pies (15," 20," and 24") and substantial slices for street eating at new advertiser **Evio's Pizza & Grill** (12600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-899-7699). The "grill" part of the name means that those who aren't up for pizza have numerous other options: wings, burgers, fish and chips, an unusual Cuban sandwich (Tampa-style, with salami as well as the usual ham and pork), and, though we hate to admit it, a lamb/beef gyro that's so tasty we might stop ordering pizza.

Well, maybe not till another few dozen stops at **Laurenzo's Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381) for their wood-oven pies. Owner David Laurenzo says that original pizzaiolo Carlo has been replaced by Don Vito, whose artisan dough, sauces, and toppings produce pies as authentic as always, according to diner feedback.

Ramen noodle bowls have been on the menu, then off, then on again at the new advertiser that opened, just a few months ago, as Machiya Ramen Noodle House and almost immediately became just **Machiya** (3252 NE 1st Ave. #116, 786-507-5025). Don't be confused. The place has always been more of a contemporary izakaya — an Asian gastropub with a wide variety of hot and cold small plates, plus sushi — than a noodle joint. Add striking décor and a happy hour with bargain bar bites (\$1 spicy crispy wings, \$2 panko curry buns, more) plus 2-for-1 drinks, and you have an eatery that has been popular from Day One as both after-work hangout and date/party place.

Road trip, anyone? For major meat lovers, new restaurant advertiser **Sigla la Vaca** in Coral Gables (121 Alhambra Plaza, 305-448-2511) is well worth the drive. The original 1993 concept of this wildly popular Argentinean chain was to

be a good value prix fixe parrilla place, all-inclusive with none of the usual annoying "surprise" extra charges for everything but the major meat plate. At this first American branch, everything is included, from salad bar through grill choices (many different cuts of pork, chicken, or custom-cooked beef) to dessert and beverage. Bring in this issue's ad for a 20% discount.

February also brings a spectacular special from Thai/sushi spot **Siam Rice** (7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516): two bottles of imported Singha beer for just \$5. And that's not just during dinner but at lunchtime, Monday-Saturday till 3:30 p.m., when the neighborhood flocks for \$7.99 lunch specials, including beef, pork, chicken, or tofu prepared a dozen different ways, plus seven noodle and three fried-rice dishes. See siamricethaiandsushi.com for complete menus.

If you're looking for a very special Valentine's Day dinner, reserve, as soon as possible, at **Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus** (1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002). Chef/owner/gracious host Alex Richter will be serving an exotic five-course dinner for two, nicely priced at \$99 per couple, from 6:00 p.m. to midnight.

To add dancing to the dinner, Aventura's **Fred Astaire Dance Studio** (18835 Biscayne Blvd., 305-692-5800) has scheduled a big Valentine's Day party on February 14, starting at 8:30 p.m. Dress code, says manager Maria Blazevec, is "dress to impress." For those who want to impress with their smooth dance moves, she's also offering one free private lesson to new customers who sign on beforehand. Call for an appointment.

Finally, here's a romantic idea for those more into sitting than dancing: tickets to the **Florida Grand Opera** (305-854-1643), whose performance season at the Arsht Center goes into full swing this month with two shows that are on almost everyone's list of Greatest Hits: Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bellini's *La Sonnambula (The Sleepwalker)*, which feature some of the most gorgeous soprano singing, spectacular costumes, and wicked females in the opera world. There aren't any performances on Valentine's Day itself, but romance shouldn't be just for one day of the month. Go to www.fgo.org for tix.

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

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Miami FL



Kitchen Question

A culinary experiment is under way in Miami: Can a talented and passionate chef survive on donations?

By Harriette Yahr

Photos by Silvia Ros

There was once a time, not long ago, when tracking down a vegetarian meal in Miami meant heading to hole-in-the-wall health-food stores or breaking out your frayed *Moosewood Cookbook* for a go at your own tofu sloppy joes. Today, to the delight of veggie lovers and foodies alike, meatless options are literally popping up all over town.

There are fast-food options and haute cuisine — and then there's Love and Vegetables, a pop-up café that showcases fresh, local produce with a fresh economic twist.

Love and Vegetables is the culinary child of Pennsylvania transplants Keith Kalmanowicz and Melisa Phifer. But before delving into the characters, let's set today's scene.

"Local" and "organic" have made their way into mainstream culture, and going vegetarian, even vegan (no animal products whatsoever), is not just for hippies or the old-school Coconut Grove crowd anymore. Financial and environmental concerns have given rise to folks foraging from home gardens and frequenting farmers markets.

Interest in fair-trade practices, factory farming, and "carbon footprint" are no longer relegated to the domain of flaming liberals, except maybe in the minds of the Rush Limbaugh crowd. Miami is still no Portland, Oregon, when it comes to green lifestyle — the city's not picking up compost along with recyclables and it's the exception not the rule to find, say, mung bean bolognaise. Yet,

whether born of trend or consciousness, it's a great time to veg-out in Miami.

In fact, it's a great time to eat across the culinary spectrum. Miami's food scene has exploded the past few years. We've gone from a wannabe foodie town to a bona-fide, Zagat-rated destination. Top chefs are not only breezing through town for the South Florida Wine and Food Festival (held this month), they're setting up additional shops.

Take José Andrés (The Bazaar), Andrew Carmellini (The Dutch), and Jean-Georges Vongerichten (J&G Grill), who now have locations here. As for chefs/owners who call Miami home, along the Biscayne Corridor, the legendary Norman Van Aken launched Tuyo (sitting atop Miami-Dade College's new Miami Culinary Institute) and this past year Daniel Serfer's Blue Collar touched down squarely. Meanwhile perennials from Michelle Bernstein (Michy's) and Michael Schwartz (Michael's Genuine Food & Drink) continue to thrive as freshly minted eateries from the Design District (MC Kitchen) to Wynwood (Bloom) trend solidly. Add to this the food-truck scene, which persists beyond fad.

It would fit perfectly if Keith relocated here to stake his claim in the crowd: "Young upstart chef sets eyes on South Florida for new vegan venture." But that's not true. Keith's not even a vegan. And Miami was initially meant as a stopover. Yet here he is, busting out roasted beet salad (with orange vinaigrette and crushed pecans) and papaya

star fruit chutney (with pickled mustard seeds, cumin, and fennel seeds) at what have now become twice-monthly (at minimum) gatherings.

Even if you don't have money, you're welcome to join in. Everybody can eat at Love and Vegetables. Keith's mission, as he puts it: "To feed as many people — regardless of means — healthy, farm-fresh, yummy and delicious vegan food." He follows standards set forth by the One World Everybody Eats Foundation, a nonprofit "pay-what-you-can" restaurant model, adding his own pop-up twist.

Keith's story reads like many sick-of-the-rat-race tales, with dashes of fate and destiny thrown in for good balance. He hails from Dupont, Pennsylvania, a small town outside Scranton. Although his parents ran a grocery/deli called Kalmanowicz's, which had been in the family for more than 100 years (Keith worked there since age 14 slicing meats and stocking shelves), the food industry was nowhere on his career radar.

He describes fleeing to Arizona for college and bouncing from major to major until, after seven years, at around age 26, he dropped out and headed to San Francisco. That was in 2005, when start-ups were booming. Keith says he thrived in sales and marketing, building and building his résumé, until one day, on the heels of a six-figure salary offer, he realized something was missing. "You get to this place of success," he recalls, "and you ask, 'Is this all there is?'"

It hit him that he hadn't seen his family in four years. So he scrapped his life in San Francisco and headed back East. He took something important home with him. "I tasted food for the first time in San Francisco," he says. "Mission-style burritos, fusion food, Asian fusion, French-Vietnamese. I didn't even know that combination of food existed. There was just every style of food. It was a mixture of flavors I never experienced, food cooked delicately and properly, with great technique. It just opened up my palate."

Back in Pennsylvania, Keith got a job in sales for an online company. At night he cooked meals with his dad. He began eating more vegetables. And he took up yoga to relieve persistent back pain.

Yoga changed his life. "Before yoga, I was scattered," he explains. "I thought a thousand different ideas a minute and I was proud of that, but I was living in the clouds. I had no structure, no grounding. I was an instant-gratification kid. Yoga taught me patience. It taught me that it was okay where I am, and through regular practice, I'll get to be where I want to be."

Keith says yoga gave him goals to work toward and a method to get there. He started living so "in the moment" that he quit his sales job, which he hated, and enrolled in culinary school. By this time, Kalmanowicz's deli and grocery had been sold, so it was too late to carry on the family tradition. But he found his passion, what he wanted to do in life: cook.

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Melisa Phifer was the organizational master of Love and Vegetables.

Kitchen Question

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The end of this chapter in Keith's story owes a lot to his girlfriend at the time, Melisa Phifer, whom he met on eHarmony in his epiphanic yoga days. She wanted to move to Costa Rica. Keith signed on. They figured they'd stop in Miami to save up money, learn un poquito de español, then be on their way.

Time, as they say, moves slowly in South Florida.

For three years now, Miami has been Keith's home. He's been fortunate to learn from some of Miami's best chefs: Sam Gorenstein (My Ceviche), Daniel Ganem (the Raleigh), and powerhouse Michael Schwartz. It's Gorenstein whom he credits as being his "first real chef" and the pro who gave him his first break, hiring him at BLT Steak, even when his knife skills "sucked" and he was "ridiculously unqualified" to work in a high-end kitchen. ("I dropped out after one semester of culinary school, in northeastern Pennsylvania, where people's highest ambitions are to work at Applebee's," Keith jokes.)

It was Keith's ambition and willingness to learn that impressed Gorenstein. "He came to the interview very humble regarding his kitchen skills," Gorenstein recounts. "I knew right away that he needed the opportunity. I could see the smile on his face the first day in the kitchen."

Keith recalls cutting "a lot of beets" and sharpening his knife skills under executive sous chef Daniel Ganem. "He wanted to learn something new every single day," remembers Ganem. "I think

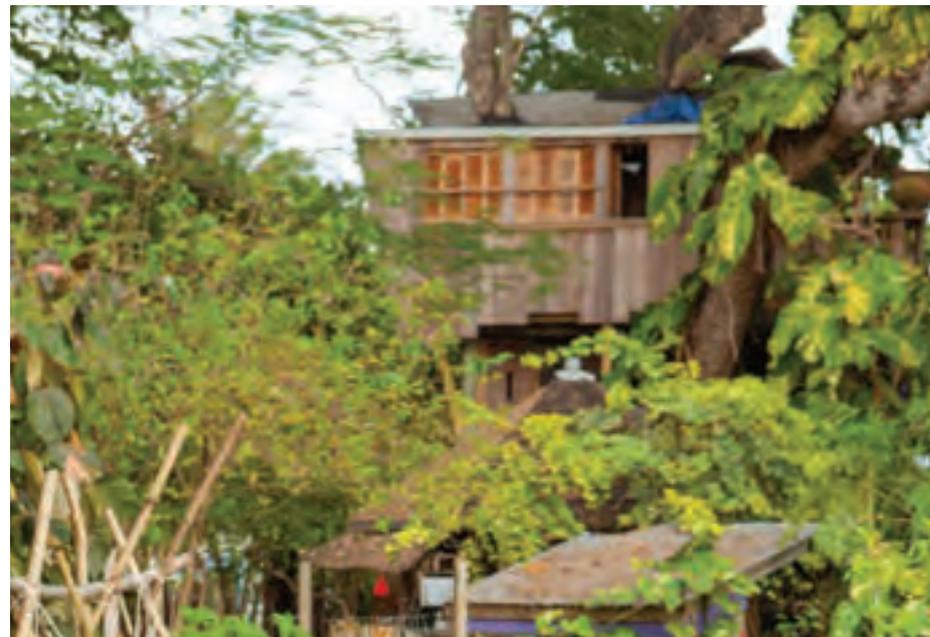
that's what made him grow."

During a break in Costa Rica (Keith and Melisa finally made it down there), Keith's zeal for farm-fresh food got hold of him, and he returned to Miami with the ambition of working for Michael Schwartz, the prince of local and know-your-source cooking.

By this time Keith's résumé had some heft — he knew how to slice, dice, and brunoise. He got a gig working the oven at Harry's Pizzeria in the Design District (a Michael Schwartz restaurant named after his son), and a few months later he was in the kitchen at Michael's Genuine, working the hot line and contributing soup and sandwich specials. "Keith was very creative and passionate," says Schwartz. "He was always interested in using the freshest ingredients, many of which he foraged himself locally."

About the foraging, most prescient was the day chef de cuisine Bradley Herron offered Keith a job as produce buyer. Ellie Groden, Michael Schwartz's assistant, soon dubbed Keith their "in-house cook/neighborhood farmer/goat whisperer/produce forager."

Here's a guy who jokes he hadn't eaten a vegetable until age 30, and now he was out at 5:30 a.m. sourcing produce, getting to know vendors, and being schooled in produce quality. Keith says he owes an enormous amount to the exacting standards at Michael's Genuine. "I had to buy two to three bushels of brussel sprouts a day during peak season, and if I walked in the door with the wrong size, they were thrown at my head from across the kitchen," he says. Then



The organic garden at the Earth-n-Us Farm is a marvel of richness and variety.

getting serious: "Working at Michael's, I learned the South Florida growing season. I learned what to purchase to upkeep production. I now know what to buy based on umpteen criteria of shape, size, color, taste, smell, and touch."

Then one day in January 2012, in what will later be seen as a turning point, Matrice Jackson, a guy who fixes bicycles for kids in Little Haiti, needed parts for his makeshift bike shop. Keith and Melisa decided to throw a fundraiser, and Love and Vegetables was born.

A lot can influence our direction in life, from lovers to mentors to the place we call home. Keith and Melisa live on Earth-n-Us Farm, Ray Chasser's urban oasis in Little Haiti that houses a motley crew of animals (goats, emus, and more), and people (about 25 in total), and an amazing organic garden (from collards to hot peppers to you name it).

It's an educational and residential inner-city marvel spanning three acres, complete with indoor and outdoor kitchens and a multi-level tree house, all designed with the aim — now going on 35 years — of modeling how to "peacefully co-exist and care for the earth and each other."

Earth-n-Us is the kind of place a guy might set up a makeshift bike co-op for local kids who otherwise would have no way to get their wheels rolling, and it's the kind of place some other folks might transform into a magical, candlelit wonderland for a pop-up dinner.

For Matrice's fundraiser, Melisa took on general management, they got the word out via Facebook and by knocking

on doors (to reach those not into the Internet), and friend/colleague/tree house resident Chantelle Sookram joined Keith to cook up a gourmet vegan meal that included calalou soup and raw zucchini pasta with purple basil pesto, sourced from Allapattah Market (NW 12th Avenue and 22nd Street) and Earth-n-Us. Then they watched the donations pour in.

"It was very successful," says Melisa. "Friends of the farm brought out grown children's bikes and parts, and donated money for the purchase of tools and necessary parts." The response made Keith and Melisa think: Why not throw more events incorporating produce from local gardens to raise money for other worthy causes?

That was just over a year ago. To date, Love and Vegetables has fed hundreds and negotiated its share of growing pains. There are monthly dinners at Earth-n-Us (7630 NE 1st Ave.) and at Lagniappe House (3425 NE 2nd Ave.), a chilled-out venue near Midtown Miami. They've run pop-ups in Wynwood for the monthly art walks, collaborations at Teena's Pride and Robert Borek Farms (Homestead) and Bee Heaven Farm (the Redland), and they've served up privately catered meals.

It's juncture time for Keith. As with any start-up, it's time to take stock. What's working and what's not? What modifications need to be made? What about long-term goals? Back in November, Keith cut his hours at Michael's Genuine, leaving the kitchen to concentrate on buying produce. Soon after, he

Continued on page 32



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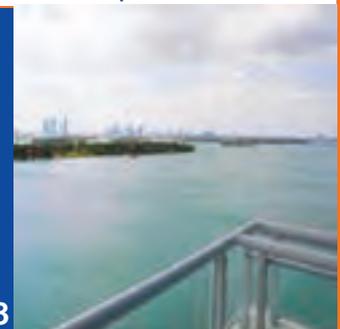


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LA PLAYA
P R O P E R T I E S

Kitchen Question

Continued from page 30

stopped altogether to focus his efforts on Love and Vegetables — and his goal of opening a nonprofit community café.

Last month Keith was off to Brunswick, New Jersey, to attend the One World Everybody Eats Foundation annual summit, a powwow for activists and restaurateurs committed to the pay-what-you-can business — and life — model. Keith was a featured speaker, sharing his pop-up process. Everyone compared notes on how they can, and do, feed people regardless of means. And it's possible, not just idealistic.

On a corporate level, you can read about Panera Bread, which now has four pay-what-you-can Panera Cares community cafés in operation around the nation. And rocker John Bon Jovi joined the humanitarian effort, opening a JBJ Soul Kitchen in Red Bank, New Jersey. There are plenty of skeptics who say a restaurant can't possibly survive on what amounts to gift-economics, but haven't oddsmakers and visionaries always butted paradigms?



Lagniappe House has hosted several Love and Vegetable pop-up dinners.

Keith may be the rare pay-what-you-can entrepreneur in town, but he doesn't pretend to be the Big Kahuna of the vegan movement. In fact there is not a lot of ego in his motivation. He registers as a self-avowed idea man with a desire to be of service to others through his exuberant love of food. This guy just loves

vegetables. He'll even make you excited about the flowers on a tomato plant or the worms on a basil leaf.

And he admits he has a lot to learn, especially when it comes to organization. When Melisa and Keith parted romantic ways, Melisa's management skills left the project. They're both still living at

Earth-n-Us Farm, though separately. Melisa is currently farm director.

There have been bumps in the road for Love and Vegetables as Keith adjusts to life and business without Melisa. You can read all about it on his blog. Transparency — a quality close to the heart of the local food movement — is also his personal mantra. "Some people say I'm too open and I share too much," he muses. "Other people gravitate toward that. It creates this atmosphere of vulnerability to put yourself out there. But that's just me, I don't want to pretend." From his emotional struggles to his own try at veganism to the Instagrams of local Kohlrabi and heirloom tomatoes — stuff he gets so hyped up about it's hard to imagine it took him so long to find his calling, which seems embedded in his DNA — everything is on the table.

Transparency has served Keith well. There's an honesty that permeates Love and Vegetables, from the actual honor system (you are in charge of paying) to mea culpas about running late, not having an extra tarp in place when it

Continued on page 34

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Kunal Mirchandani, Esq.

Kitchen Question

Continued from page 32

rained, or realizing there wasn't a freezer at Lagniappe House, so the tremblique — a coconut custard dessert (with Keith's local strawberry spin) — wasn't going to get plated that night.

These pop-up happenings have a charming air of improvisation. You never know far in advance what dishes will be served; Keith hand-picks whatever produce is ripe and available as close to the event as possible. Recipes rarely have been tested, a notable exception was the sold-out coconut corn chowder that Keith developed at Michael's Genuine. Usually dishes hit (the eggplant with dal and the lemon-basil green beans were two of tastiest vegan dishes I've ever had) but sometimes they miss (raw-food night comes to mind, minus the excellent raw potato latke with apple papaya chutney, and the chocolate avocado pudding).

Beyond the food is the positive feeling at Love and Vegetables events. Pretense is at a low. Imagine you're hanging out with friends in your own backyard, and it's catered, and you don't have to do the dishes. Unless you want. In the



From the start, Chantelle Sookram was vital to Keith's operation, and then she left.

spirit of pay-what-you-can, you're free to trade what you can. Want to work for your meal? Helping out in the kitchen is always an option. It's also a necessity.

Key main ingredients in Love and Vegetables are the volunteers, the community of people who prop it up from the front to the

back of the house. Keith points out Alison Krochina, Gloria O'Byrne, and Maurice Pierre as vital. Craig Simon, Diego Luis Feliciano-Lopez, and Chantelle Sookram have served as co-chefs. Chantelle was a mainstay of Love and Vegetables until very recently, offering a yin to Keith's yang — and cooking

up a standout kale and chickpea soup.

So what about the numbers? How is the pay-what-you-can model working? Keith says he's always made a modest profit, which he puts right back into his cause. People are coming, two dinners have sold out weeks in advance, and you can check Yelp to get a feel for the happy customers. Keith says there's lots of movement, "but not necessarily in the right direction."

The people turning up for the dinners, for the most part, can afford to pay. But he also wants to attract people who can't. "I walk a few blocks in any direction of a dinner, and there are people who could benefit from a good meal, and I have to find a way to get them in here."

Writing this, I wondered if critics of the vegan lifestyle might ready their pens. I've been on this vegetarian/vegan path for a chunk of time, more than 30 years, and I've dug into heaps of perspectives. "Going vegan" definitely can inspire ferocity. Check, for example, comments on the *New York Times* website whenever meatless recipes are innocently offered and you can feel the

Continued on page 36

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Kitchen Question

Continued from page 34

judgments waft off your screen.

It cuts all ways. Surely there are gluten-free advocates, lacto-vegetarians (eats dairy), ovo-vegetarians (eats eggs), raw foodists, vegans, seagans (vegans who eat seafood), as well as steak lovers and Miamiterians (just seeing if you're reading) who think their way is the best way.

The great news is Love and Vegetables offers a white flag, better yet a multi-colored flag, to all. This is not a self-righteous, proselytizing group. Love and Vegetables is about celebration. These are chefs, after all. They love to cook and share their food with everyone.

That's not to say there isn't a point of view Love and Vegetables embodies. There is. It's an agenda, in a way, of their two main ingredients: love and vegetables. Keith prioritizes seasonal, local, and sustainable produce. He supports the benefits of fresh, plant-based food, and wants everyone to have access, regardless of means. Think of it as low-impact dining.

If it's a good idea to choose actions that cause the least harm, that consume



Keith with students at the vegetable garden at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Overtown.

the least energy and maximize care of self and others, including animals and the environment — all the while being tasty and fun and free-form enough to be inspiring — Love and Vegetables comes close to the ideal.

In terms of the Zeitgeist, Keith seems to be right on cue. Even *U.S. News & World Report*, about as mainstream as you can get, is now pushing the value of plant-based diets. It used to be that Dennis Kucinich was the freaky

vegetarian politician, but today former President Bill Clinton is championing the health benefits of a vegan diet — and Harvard is backing up claims with data.

Pop culture has embraced meatless eating, from best-sellers like *Skinny Bitch* to documentaries like *Forks Over Knives* and *Food, Inc.*, shining a light on industrial agriculture and meat production. In our Biscayne Corridor neighborhoods, even a few fast-food joints — a good indicator of reach — like Chipotle, Lime Fresh Mexican Grill, Pasha's, and Sakaya Kitchen incorporate some form of local or ethically raised products.

And there are more veggie-centric, independent restaurants along the Corridor than ever before, among them Mi Vida Café, Garden of Eatin', Namaste, Here Comes the Sun, Shing Wang Vegetarian, Green House Organic, Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin, and newcomer Guarapo Organic Juice Bar.

There are also farms where you can pick your own. Keith's mainstays nearby include Little Haiti Community Garden (5804 NE 2nd Ave.) and farmer Muriel

Continued on page 38

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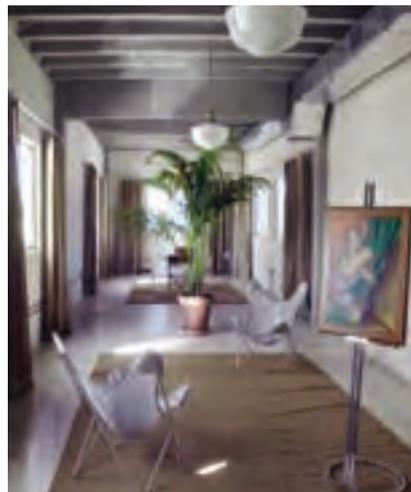
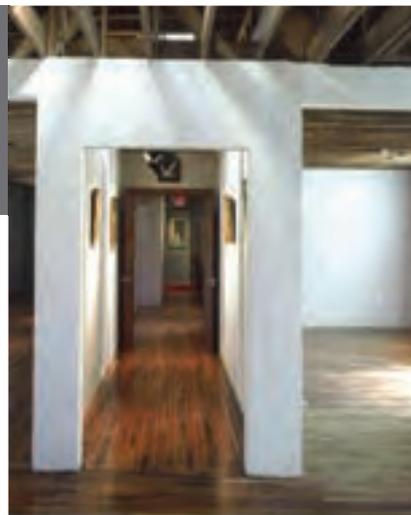
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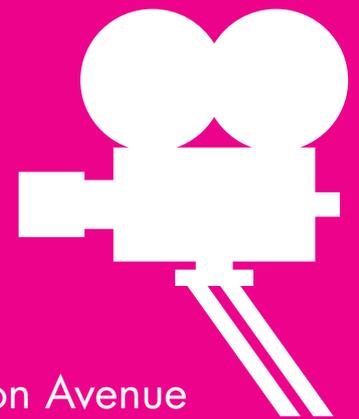


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Kitchen Question

Continued from page 36

Olivares's Little River Market Garden (8290 NE 4th Ave.), in addition to his own backyard. (The Urban Oasis Project, which bolsters local gardens and farmers markets, is also worth checking out.) For a rundown of veg-centric offerings, visit MeatlessMiami.com (operated by Lauren "Lolo" Reskin of indie record store and vegan coffee shop Sweat Records) and VegSouthFlorida.com. For the adventurous, Earth-n-Us hosts a vegan potluck every Thursday.

So there's a burgeoning vegetarian/vegan scene in Miami, and it has been keeping Keith busy. January included a "Taco Night" at Lagniappe House and a "Love and Tomatoes" fundraiser at Teena's Pride. As part of his share-the-vegetable-love ethos, Chef Keith took time out to be Farmer Keith for students at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Overtown, assisting Ellie Groden with maintaining a school garden as part of Michael Schwartz's "Chefs Move to Schools" community outreach, an outgrowth of Michelle



On a rainy night in December, guests enjoy a Love and Vegetables dinner at Earth-n-Us Farm.

Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign.

Keith was energetically journeying along this path — planning his future, refining his goals, deepening his commitment — when all of a sudden an obstacle appeared. The story took a turn, and his "go with the flow" philosophy for Love and Vegetables was put to the test.

Chantelle Sookram stepped away from the project.

She says she's grateful that Keith introduced her to world of vegan cooking, but it's time to move on. Love and Vegetables is a huge commitment, she says, and "it's way too stressful to continue doing for something that's not yours."

She's now working at My Ceviche and is excited about finding her own culinary style (she's only 22 years old).

Keith adapted quickly. "I'm all about happiness and outrageous joy," he says, "and if Chantelle's not feeling it, that's okay."

Following Chantelle's departure, Keith canceled his January dinner, planned in honor of his trip to the One World Everybody Eats conference. What this meant — besides not getting to taste versions of New Jersey-themed food such as pastrami cauliflower with house-fermented sauerkraut — was that money Keith thought he'd use to travel to the conference would not materialize. Nor did any other money exist. Keith says he's never taken a penny from his events and had "four dollars in quarters" to his name.

How would he get to New Jersey? And in four days?

He talked about cobbling together some cash to take a bus, asking friends, but everyone he knew was broke. I asked him if he ever thought of sponsors — that's

Continued on page 40

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Kitchen Question

Continued from page 38

something he plans to investigate. I asked him how he feels about asking others for help — that's not something he's very comfortable doing. We talk about the idea that, sometimes, people *like* to help others, and that others may even want to support him and his aim to do good in the world.

About an hour later, I received an e-mail linking to Rally.org, a crowd-funding website. There I see a page titled, "Living on a Prayer: New Jersey or Bust!" It's Keith. "I need help to travel to this amazing conference. In exchange for your donations, I will cook one meal made with love to everyone who donates."

It was stunning to watch the support pour in. Fourteen hours later, Keith reached his goal of \$500 for transportation to the event.

"I love what you are doing for this community! Delicious, nutritious, and full of love. It's a beautiful thing," wrote supporter Chira Cassel. "I hope you get well over your goal, you deserve it." And people kept giving. Keith did top over his goal. "Bring home more vegetable



Chef Daniel Ganem: "He puts so much love into the project. Whenever you see cooks like that, you get really proud of them."

wisdom for our Miami family," added Nicole Davis. A day later Keith booked his ticket. He was off to New Jersey.

Chef Sam Gorenstein says Keith has come a long way in the past three years: "He doesn't lose his focus easily. He drew

a path that he wants to pursue and follow, and personally that's very respectable." Gorenstein believes Love and Vegetables is a great project. "It's based on his beliefs," he says. "The way he sees and feels his cooking — it speaks very

highly of him and what he wants to accomplish one day."

Chef Daniel Ganem concurs: "He puts so much love into the project. Whenever you see cooks like that, you see them grow because of going through their own path. You get really proud of them."

Keith certainly has a lot of people rooting for him and his infectious, unwavering belief in his quest. "He's going to do great, either at Love and Vegetables or in his future," says Ganem. "He has the passion and drive to be better and better."

So what does the future hold? Will he reach his goal of opening a nonprofit pay-what-you-can Love and Vegetables Community Café in Miami? "I've surrendered to the belief in altruism," says Keith, "and that by doing so, everything will be okay, and abundance will flow."

Learn more about Love and Vegetables, and be part of the next chapter, at www.LoveandVeggies.com. Upcoming events include a Valentine's dinner on February 16 and a Super Bowl Sunday bash.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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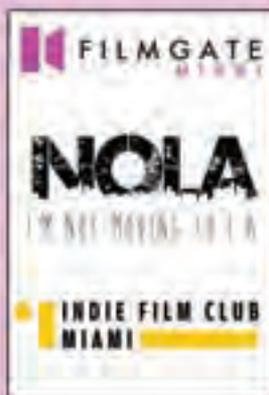
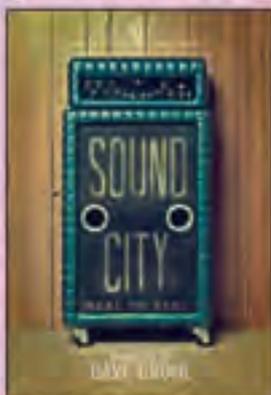
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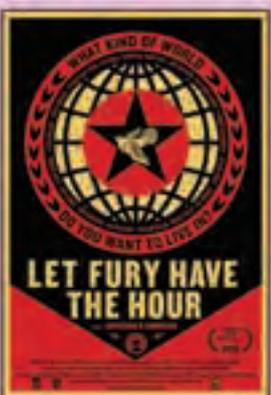


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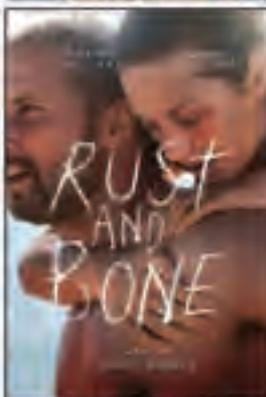
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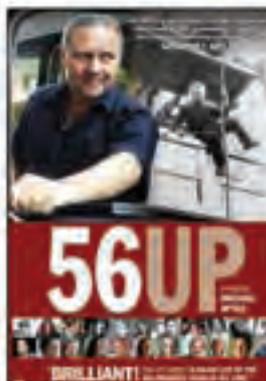
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By **Jim Mullin**
BT Editor

In his story “Tase the Season” (December 2012), *Biscayne Times* contributor Derek McCann recounted an incident that took place at the Zales jewelry store in Aventura Mall. McCann had gone to Zales this past November 8 to make a purchase using his newly opened Zales credit account.

When Zales employees became suspicious that McCann might be engaged in some form of identity theft or criminal fraud, Aventura police officers responded to the store. In his story, McCann described a frightening scene that suggested gross overreaction by the police.

After McCann filed a complaint with the Aventura Police Department, an investigation was opened, led by Capt. Bryan Pegues, the department’s internal affairs investigator.

Below is his final report. It has been edited for style and space, but otherwise appears here verbatim.

This complaint was originally submitted via the Internet on November 9, 2012. Upon receiving

the complaint, Sergeant Brinson met with Mr. McCann on November 15 to determine if he could identify any of the involved officers and to determine if anything more serious occurred.

Mr. McCann reviewed the employee photographs and identified the following employees: #61 (Terry Scott) as the person making the comment about the knife; #4 (Jason Fernandez) as the person who pointed the Taser at him; #48 (Nelson Reyes) as the supervising officer who did nothing wrong.

After her interview with McCann, Sergeant Brinson determined that the allegations only involved unprofessional behavior. Since one of the allegations was against Sgt. Terry Scott, a decision was made to assign the complaint to Capt. Mike Bentolila. Sergeant Scott is assigned to the Operations Division, which falls under Captain Bentolila’s supervision.

On November 26, 2012, Captain Bentolila contacted McCann and informed him that he was looking into the complaint. After speaking to McCann, Bentolila spoke with Michelle Snyder, the manager of Zales Jewelers, located inside the Aventura Mall. She told Bentolila that she was in the store



Zales video courtesy of Aventura Police Department

Derek McCann (seated with back to camera) and a Zales employee review paperwork.

during the incident and observed an officer point a Taser at Mr. McCann. She added that she heard the Taser make a crackling sound as if it were being discharged in a drive-stun mode.

After hearing this comment, Bentolila asked Snyder to provide him with a written statement describing the incident. According to Bentolila, she agreed and told him that she would call him when the statement was ready.

Based on this new allegation — an improper discharge/display of the Taser — a decision was made to reclassify the

incident as an Internal Affairs Investigation and assign it to me.

I received the complaint on 11/26/2012, and conducted the following investigative steps:

- I called and spoke to Michelle Snyder, the manager at Zales. She told me that she saw some type of light emanating from the officer’s Taser but was unsure if she observed an actual electrical discharge. I asked her if her statement was ready and if she could provide me with the in-store video. She told me that she would have to

Continued on page 44

50 Eggs in Search of a Home

That would be John Kunkel’s company, and he found just the right place in the MiMo District

By **Erik Bojnansky**
BT Senior Writer

Local restaurant entrepreneur John Kunkel has been very busy. Within the past 14 months, the founder and CEO of 50 Eggs opened the highly regarded Yardbird restaurant in South Beach and sold his Lime Fresh

Mexican Grill chain for \$24 million to a much bigger chain, Ruby Tuesday.

He then used the proceeds to create three new restaurants: Khong River House and the future Kungfuzi in South Beach, and the soon-to-open Swine Southern Table & Bar in Coral Gables.

Kunkel also acquired an advertising agency called the Southern Brand



Photo by Michael Pisarrì

John Kunkel sold Lime Fresh Mexican Grill for a bundle, which he used to buy the Sunshine Motel.

Collective, so in addition to running restaurants, 50 Eggs also offers brand conception, marketing, interior design, even construction services for other companies.

Now Kunkel is embarking on a new project: transforming the 74-year-old, three-story Sunshine Motel at 7350 Biscayne Blvd. into 50 Eggs’ new home. “The building itself was really just the perfect space for what we wanted to do,” Kunkel says. “It completes the vision of a new headquarters and our test kitchen concept.”

When the building is ready, 50 Eggs will move its offices from 4770 Biscayne Blvd. to the Sunshine Motel’s two top floors. Kunkel says the ground floor will become the test kitchen, a space where

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Now You See It, Now You Don't

Walmart's latest plan for Midtown Miami includes a scrim of retail shops that hide the superstore from view

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

Walmart and Midtown Miami's largest property owner have put aside their differences to jointly develop a five-acre parcel at the southern end of a 56-acre community of high-rise condos, offices, restaurants, boutique stores, and corporate retail.

The new design includes street-level shops and new street furniture and landscaping on public sidewalks. However, Walmart, which has been proposing various plans for a Midtown Miami store for at least a year, is still unpopular among many Biscayne Corridor residents who fear that the store will destroy the area's unique character and kill off anything that may compete with the mega-discount retailer.

The latest plans call for a 196,600-square-foot complex between NE 31st Street to the north, N. Miami Avenue to the west, Midtown Boulevard to the east, and NE 29th Street to the south. The project could come before the City of Miami's Urban Design Review Board for approval as early as February 20, although no firm date has yet been set, says Luciana Gonzalez, special assistant to the city's planning director.

Walmart executives hope to build a hiring center on the site this year, commence construction in the summer, and open by 2014. "We believe a Walmart in Midtown can be part of the solution for folks who need a job or want more choices when it comes to their shopping needs," says Steven Restivo, Walmart's senior director of community affairs, via e-mail, adding that the store will "employ about 400 construction workers and 350 associates."

But Grant Stern, a real estate analyst and mortgage broker who started an online petition against Walmart last year,

says it will be a disaster for Midtown Miami. He vows to continue fighting it. "There's no reason for them to get what they ask for," says Stern, president of Morningside Mortgage and an Edgewater resident who frequently visits Midtown Miami. "It's not up to the city's code."

The largest chunk of the proposed complex is a 158,300-square-foot Walmart "superstore" designed by the architecture firm Gensler and South Florida planning firm Kimley-Horn and Associates. There will also be a parking garage with 560 spaces, vehicular access at NE 31st Street and N. Miami Avenue, and a loading dock facing NE 31st Street wide enough for four delivery trucks. And since the Walmart is a "superstore," it'll sell just about everything — tools, clothes, groceries, electronics, furniture, jewelry, cosmetics — at prices the company expects will be lower than any other store in the vicinity.

But if the Walmart is built, you won't be able to see it while strolling along on Midtown Boulevard, the north-south street one block east of N. Miami Avenue. That's because a 16,300-square-foot retail building designed by local architect Bernard Zyscovich (who created Midtown Miami's master plan) will be developed along the two-lane street.

Dubbed the Liner Shops at Midtown, the pedestrian-friendly commercial operation will be developed, owned, and operated by Midtown Opportunities, a real estate investment firm that now owns 22 acres of Midtown land, including the three existing condominium buildings. Of those 22 acres, 16 are currently vacant, and include parcels across Midtown Boulevard from the proposed Walmart. Until recently, Midtown Opportunities strongly opposed Walmart's project.

Deborah Samuel, senior vice president of Midtown Opportunities, says Liner Shops will protect the integrity



At the northwest corner of NE 29th Street and Midtown Boulevard: Where's the Walmart?



Southwest corner of NE 31st Street and Midtown Boulevard: Again, where's that darn Walmart?

of Midtown Boulevard as a street filled with fashionable restaurants and boutique stores. "We're going to try and bring in something different, casual, urban chic, and cool," says Samuel, wife of original Midtown Miami co-developer Michael Samuel. "There'll be a little something for everyone."

The Liner Shops will be built on an easement that Midtown Opportunities happens to own. In its previous plans, Walmart wanted to build a ramp for a parking garage on top of that easement — something that lawyers for Midtown Opportunities didn't appreciate. After fierce opposition from Midtown Miami residents, the city's Planning and Zoning Appeals Board rejected Walmart's earlier proposal this past July.

Stern says the Liner Shops are a step in the right direction, but feels that Midtown Opportunities was required to compromise owing to a reciprocal easement agreement attached to the

properties. "Midtown Opportunities is a healthy actor in the community," Stern adds. "They follow the rules, even when they wish they didn't have to."

Samuel, however, insists her associates were never against Walmart being built in Midtown Miami. They just wanted to protect the integrity of Midtown Boulevard as a street reserved for unique restaurants and mom-and-pop shops. "Midtown Boulevard is supposed to be a buffer between the big-box retail on one side and residential on the other, and I think it works," she says.

At the very least, the Liner Shops will buffer 6 Midtown Miami, a 33-story condo tower with 398 residential units and 12 commercial spaces that Midtown Opportunities' partners Samuel, Alex Vadia, and Suzanne DeWitt want to build across the street from the proposed Walmart complex, according to the

Continued on page 48



Officer Joseph Craig, facing McCann, points his Taser (in his right hand) at the suspect.



Officer Elricco Barnes handcuffs McCann after patting him down.

No Credible Evidence

Continued from page 42

speak to her legal department before providing me with a statement or with the in-store video. She would not review what led to the police entering the store on November 8 without permission from legal. After our initial conversation, she never returned any of my phone calls.

- I requested and received all radio transmissions and 911 calls for the incident from communications manager Fernandez.

- I obtained all of the shift line-ups for November 8. Based on the line ups, Ofcr. Jason Fernandez, who was initially identified as pointing the Taser at McCann, was excluded from the complaint since he was not on duty during the incident. The officer who displayed the Taser was Officer Craig.

- Based on the shift line-ups and radio transmissions, I obtained a printout of the following employees' Taser usage for November 8, 2012: Nelson Reyes, Jason Fernandez, Troy Vezina, Elricco Barnes, Cosimo Castronovo, Terry Scott, Jason Williams, Kevin Childs, and Joseph Craig. Officer Craig is the only employee who shows Taser usage during the date and time of the incident. According to the Taser report, Officer Craig turns on his Taser for 23 seconds on November 8 at 2013 hours. The Taser was only turned on and off. It was not deployed in a drive-stun or probe-deployment mode. At no time does the Taser record show an electrical arc from anyone's Taser during the time of the incident. After 23 seconds, Craig's Taser is turned off and not turned on again until November 15.

- I contacted Zales corporate headquarters in Irving, Texas, and spoke to staff



At one point, seven Aventura police officers were in the store, shown here.

attorney Lisa Washington-Watts. Watts sent me a copy of the video via overnight mail but told me she would not allow any employees to provide me with a written or taped statement. Other than the video, Zales would not provide any additional cooperation without subpoenas.

- I spoke to Derek McCann and obtained a sworn, taped statement from him. After his statement, McCann reduced his initial complaint to one issue: the comment an officer made to him about a knife.

- I spoke to Aventura Mall security officers Gomez and Carrell (K9).

- I spoke to Sergeant Scott, Officer Barnes, and Officer Williams. McCann identified an African-American officer as having made the comment about the knife. The listed officers are African American and had verbal contact with McCann during the incident. McCann initially identified Sergeant Scott, but I interviewed the other officers because he was not 100 percent certain who made the alleged comment.

- I spoke to Thomas McHugh, the boyfriend of Derek McCann. McHugh

arrived on the scene after McCann was unhandcuffed. Officers Reyes and Craig were the only two officers present when McHugh arrived. It should be noted that McCann refers to McHugh as his boyfriend in his taped statement and in several conversations he had with me. When I spoke to McHugh, he introduced himself as McCann's boyfriend.

After reviewing all the above information to include the video, radio transmissions, conversations with all involved parties, and McCann's taped statement, the following is what occurred:

Derek McCann opened an instant-credit account over the phone with Zales on November 8. While on the phone with the company representative, he asked if he could make an in-store purchase prior to receiving his credit card in the mail, and was told that all he needed to make a purchase in a Zales affiliated store was his account number and two forms of identification.

That same day, at approximately 2000 hours, McCann went to the Zales Jewelry store located inside the Aventura Mall to make a purchase. He presented a

store employee with his account number written on a piece of paper and his Florida driver's license. The store employee became suspicious when McCann presented her with an account number written on a piece of paper that she could not verify as valid.

Her suspicions were further aroused when the picture on the driver's license he presented did not look like him. Based on this, she alerted her manager, Michelle Snyder, who contacted mall security, via telephone, about a possible fraud occurring inside the store.

Mall security dispatched Tier 2 security officer Gomez, who was on patrol duty inside the mall, to go to the store and investigate. While walking to the store, Gomez saw Ofcr. Kevin Childs patrolling the interior of the mall and informed him of what was going on. Officer Childs told Gomez that he would wait outside the store while Gomez went in to speak with the manager.

After being told what was going on, Officer Childs transmitted over the

Continued on page 49



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50 Eggs

Continued from page 42

working chefs and the owners of small restaurants will benefit from the cooking and business knowledge he and his partners can provide — for free.

“We want to keep Miami’s small restaurants around,” says Kunkel, who has worked in restaurants since he was 16 years old. “The reality is, when you’re strung out and don’t have money, it pays to talk to someone with expertise, and we have an amazing team.”

Kunkel tells the *BT* about his dreams of holding charity dinners at the test kitchen to benefit culinary nonprofits like the James Beard Foundation and Common Threads. But then he pauses. “We’re still very early on,” he cautions. “Plans might change.”

This past December, Kunkel bought the Sunshine Motel from Alex and Rena Karakhanian and Lyle Chariff for \$3.5 million. The Karakhanians had purchased the property just 11 months earlier for \$1.5 million.

“Two million dollars in less than 12 months isn’t bad,” says Chariff, owner



BT photo by Erik Bojnansky

The Sunshine Motel: 50 Eggs will take the top two floors while a test kitchen occupies the ground floor.

of Chariff Realty Group and a minority partner with the Karakhanians, who recently have been buying properties in the Upper Eastside and the Design District.

Chariff credits the resurgence of the Upper Eastside for the quick and profitable deal. “The Biscayne Corridor between

Soyka’s and 79th Street is the next big bet,” he says. “It is just an interesting area. You have so much traffic, good restaurants; it’s an appealing place for people.”

In fact Chariff and the Karakhanians used part of the proceeds from their deal with Kunkel to buy

a 15,000-square-foot vacant parcel at 6405 Biscayne Blvd. for \$1.2 million from Javier Rabinovich and Mariano Karner, a pair of Argentine developers who had hoped to construct a small retail building on the site. Chariff’s company acted as the broker when Rabinovich and Karner acquired the land in May 2011 for \$300,000. (See the *BT*’s “There’s a Reason They Call It Boulevard of Dreams,” April 2012.)

Ironically, the Karakhanians and Chariff were initially *not* interested in selling the Sunshine Motel. “We were looking for tenants to lease it,” says Sharon Dresser, a broker for High Street Retail USA, who handled the transaction. “When we didn’t find anyone to lease it, [Kunkel] stepped up to buy it.”

Chariff says they were still reluctant: “We were pushing for the lease, but he ended up, toward the end of last year, agreeing to our selling price. It was an interesting deal and he was a pleasure to work with.”

Kunkel says he insisted on buying because he wanted 50 Eggs to own its next base of operations. And the Sunshine

Continued on page 50

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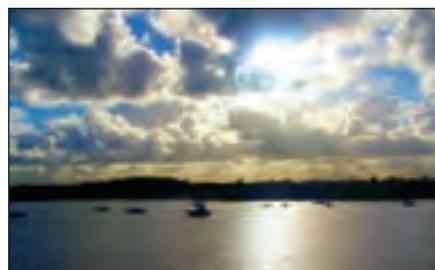


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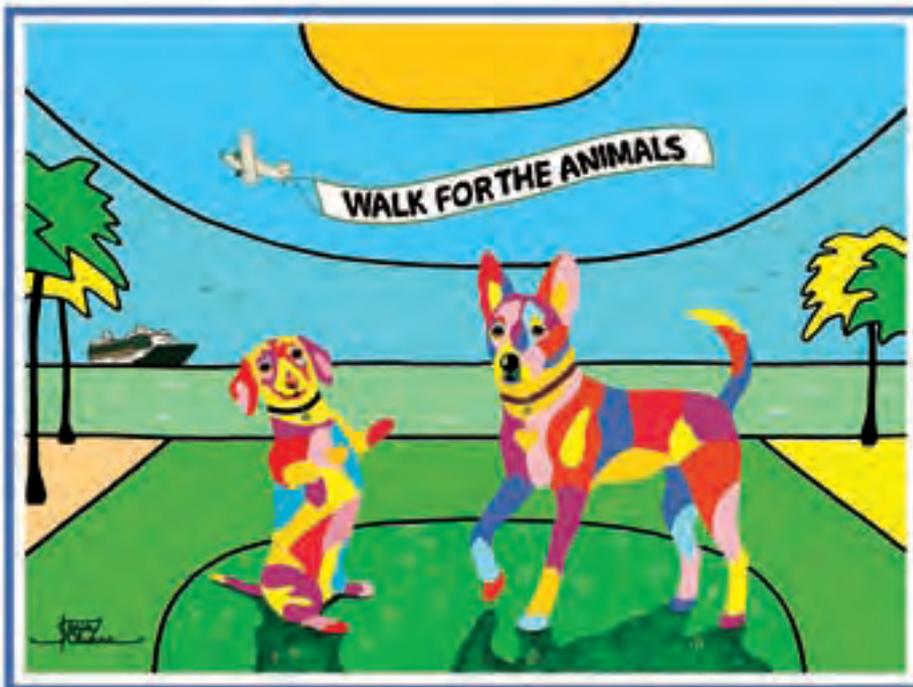
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Walmart

Continued from page 43

online real estate newsletter CondoVultures.com. The trio also filed condominium documents with the county to build another tower, 3 Midtown Miami (31 stories with 264 residential units and 14 commercial slots) between 2 Midtown Miami and 4 Midtown Miami, according to CondoVultures.com.

But Stern thinks it will take more than classy shops to protect Midtown Miami from the adverse effects of a Walmart, especially hordes of vehicles BEING driven by bargain hunters on the already clogged streets surrounding the community. "Their traffic pattern would overwhelm Midtown's traffic," he says. "It'll become a morass."

In order to accommodate the increased traffic, Walmart wants to institute a series of street modifications, including the addition of a left-turn lane on NE 31st Street where it meets N. Miami Avenue, allowing drivers to turn left and head south on the avenue. To do this, Walmart intends to eliminate the street's two parking lanes. That's



At the intersection of N. Miami Avenue and NE 29th Street: Ah ha! There it is!

a no-no under SD 27.2, which governs zoning and design standards for the western portion of Midtown Miami. That code requires 31st Street to have two eight-foot-wide lanes for parallel parking, Grant points out.

According to Stern's reading of the plans, the project doesn't leave any open space on the site, even though the code requires that at least ten percent be set

aside for such a purpose. And he says there are a host of other problems with Walmart's application: "I'm just asking that Walmart play by the rules, too, which the submitted plans clearly do not."

Jeff Morr, CEO of Majestic Properties and a 2 Midtown Miami resident, just wants Walmart to go away. He's fearful that a Walmart will destroy any neighboring commercial operation that

even remotely competes with it, thanks to the corporation's low-pricing policy. "It's going to harm local businesses, including Target," he says.

The Target now operating in the Shops at Midtown Miami sells groceries, clothes, home-improvement items, electronics, and other products at discount prices. The two retail giants are arch rivals.

Will Ander, a retail consultant with the Chicago-based McMillanDoolittle, says Target's business will take a hit once the Walmart opens just three blocks away. But the effect will only be temporary. "It'll slow down five or ten percent and then come back," he predicts. Part of the reason for the rebound is that Target and Walmart have "different consumer profiles." Walmart's items may have lower prices, Ander explains, but Target sells things Walmart doesn't have, such as designer clothes.

Ander says other chain retail stores that are anywhere near a newly built Walmart also experience a business slowdown, but then they bounce back. "The independents are the ones that generally get hurt the most," Ander says,

Continued on page 51

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No Credible Evidence

Continued from page 44

police radio that he was being advised by mall security of a possible fraud going on inside Zales. Officers Barnes and Craig indicated over the radio that they would be heading to the store as back-up officers.

Two additional officers, Williams and Vezina, happened to be patrolling inside the mall and overheard the transmission and indicated over the radio that they would be heading toward the store as well.

Mall security K9 officer Carrell heard what was going on over the mall radio and headed toward Zales. He staged outside of the Lego store, which is directly next to Zales. Carrell never entered Zales and remained out of sight the entire time.

Gomez went into the store and spoke to the manager. The store employees told him they could not confirm that the account number McCann presented was valid and that the license he presented did not match what he looked like. The store manager told Gomez she believed

something suspicious was occurring and that McCann would not present any other form of identification to the employees.

After he heard this, Gomez walked out of the store and told Officer Childs that it appeared a fraud was being committed inside. Officers Childs, Barnes, and Craig entered the store. Childs bypassed McCann, who was seated in a chair, and went directly to speak to the store employees. Officers Craig and Barnes entered right after Childs and stood on opposite sides of McCann.

Officer Craig was standing approximately three to four feet from McCann and had his Taser held at his hip, pointed in McCann's direction. He never extended his arm toward McCann or displayed an electrical arc. In his taped statement, McCann confirmed that the officer held the Taser at his side and did not display an electrical arc.

Officer Childs briefly spoke to the store employees, who indicated that a possible crime was occurring. Based on the information presented to him, Officer Childs verbally indicated to Barnes and Craig that a crime was being committed. My conversations with the involved

officers and a review of the video confirm this to be the case.

The video appears to show Officer Childs speaking to Barnes from the store manager's desk several feet away and pointing to McCann. Once Barnes is told that a crime is being committed, he asks McCann to stand up and place his hands on the counter to pat him down. After patting him down, he handcuffs McCann and tells him to sit down. Officer Craig immediately reholstered his Taser after the handcuffs were put on.

Officer Barnes removed his handcuffs a few minutes later, when a store employee received confirmation that the account number he presented was active. The officers also established that the driver's license McCann presented was valid. The photograph on the license depicts McCann at a heavier weight and with long hair. Currently he is much thinner, has tattoos, and no hair.

During the incident, Officers J. Williams, Vezina, Scott, and Reyes walk into the store for a brief time. At no time are there ever more than three or four officers around McCann. After McCann is unhandcuffed, only Officers Craig and

Reyes remain inside the store with him.

It appears from the video that Reyes and McCann are having a cordial conversation because Reyes pats him on the back and shakes his hand. While Reyes and Craig are talking to McCann, his boyfriend, Thomas McHugh, enters the store and Reyes shakes his hand as well. From the video it appears that everyone is laughing.

After all of the officers leave, McCann and McHugh can be seen sitting down at the store counter and completing a transaction before the video ends. It should be noted that McCann and McHugh came to the mall separately, but made arrangements over the phone to meet at Zales.

At no point during the video does a K9 enter the store or stage outside the store entrance. According to mall security K9 Officer Carrell, he stood outside the Lego store next door until he heard that the situation was resolved and left the area.

McCann said in his sworn statement that he did not actually see the K9. He

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

No Credible Evidence

Continued from page 49

was informed about the K9 from his boyfriend, who saw the dog walking in the vicinity as he was coming to meet McCann at the store. There was no Aventura police K9 inside the mall at any time during the incident.

In his initial complaint, McCann alleged three things:

- 15 officers stormed into the store and repeatedly threatened him.
- A German shepherd was present inside the store.
- An African-American officer told him that if he wanted to point a knife at him, he could do that.

Based on my investigation, there were never more than seven officers inside the store at any time. The majority of the officers only entered for a moment, and once they saw the situation was under control, they left. The majority of the time there was only two to three officers with McCann.

There was never a German shepherd inside the store. In fact, Mr. McCann by his own admission never saw a dog.

None of the three African-American officers that spoke to McCann remembered making any type of comment about a knife to him, nor do they remember anyone else making that type of comment.

During my taped interview with McCann, he added that someone put their hand on his chest and asked him why his heart was beating so fast. At no point on the video does anyone put their hand on his chest.

Conclusion: Unfounded.

There is no credible evidence to support any of the allegations. In fact, with the exception of the knife comment, every allegation was recanted by McCann in his taped statement and proven to be false by the video. McCann even acknowledged in his statement to me that the officers treated him well, apologized, and explained their actions. All of the officers identified by McCann denied making any comment involving a knife, and there is no credible evidence to support it.

The facts in this case support handcuffs being placed on McCann for a short time because, as indicated above, Officer Barnes was acting on information given to him that a crime had occurred. Immediately upon receiving confirmation that the information Mr. McCann presented was valid, the handcuffs were removed.

The display of the Taser upon entering the store without indication that McCann had committed a crime or was unruly is an issue of concern.

Mr. McCann did not give any indication that he was not cooperative, and Officer Craig's proximity to him made the potential for incapacitation with a probe deployment highly unlikely. Also of tactical concern is that Officer Barnes could have been struck with the probes if the Taser was deployed.

The use of the Taser in this case warrants concern, and my suggestion is to forward the issue to the Training Unit to review the tactics employed and to provide remedial training to Craig.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

50 Eggs

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Motel just gave him a "certain feeling."

"We had outgrown our office a while back and we searched high and low for a new home," Kunkel recounts. "I kept looking back to it, back to it, back to it. I started looking at the architecture and I just knew that it was the space for us."

Jocelyne Hider knows the feeling. In September 2005, she and her husband bought the 22-room Sunshine Motel, originally known as Alda Rochester Motel, for \$1.2 million. A few months later they bought the neighboring former Penn Hall Hotel, built in 1929, for \$895,000. "I fell in love with

those two Art Deco buildings," says the Haitian-American businesswoman.

The Sunshine had seen better days, though. "There were drug dealers and prostitution.... It was bad," she sighs. After operating it for a month, they shut it down and proceeded to renovate it. "We wanted to have a little hotel and then have a restaurant downstairs," Hider recalls.

Yet even after investing some \$400,000, the work was never completed. They finally sold it to the Karakhanians. "It was just so expensive," Hider says. "We couldn't keep it up."

Dresser points out that Kunkel will have a lot of work ahead. "It's actually, basically a

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Walmart

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referring to small stores and grocers.

However, restaurants, bars, service-oriented businesses, and stores selling designer goods won't necessarily be harmed by Walmart. Says Ander: "They may be *helped* by Walmart drawing more traffic to the area."

Helped, that is, if prospective customers are able to *get* to the Walmart. Ander says traffic congestion caused by the Walmart is a legitimate concern: "It could discourage some people from going there."

Morr says he's certain that Walmart will discourage the very people Midtown Miami is trying to attract: young professionals who want to work and play within walking distance of their home. For those who commute to work, Midtown Miami is close to I-95, the Julia Tuttle Causeway, and Biscayne Boulevard. If Walmart strangles Midtown Miami with cars and cheap items, Morr contends, residential and commercial values could drop: "Who wants to be by a Walmart?"

Peter Zalewski, publisher of CondoVultures.com, agrees that property values around Walmart might drop — for about a year or 18 months at the most. Zalewski suspects that Midtown Miami residential prices may already be under assault by savvy investors. "If you are a buyer, you're going to use the Walmart scenario to get a cheaper price," he says.

However, once the community adapts to the Walmart, property values will increase once again, Zalewski believes. The rest of the Wynwood neighborhood will experience price booms as well if the Walmart proves profitable for the company. "Retailers all tend to cluster," Zalewski notes. "I'll bet there's going to be a lot of big-box retailers looking to see if Walmart will be successful in the Wynwood area, simply because the land is available."

Walmart or no Walmart, Deborah Samuel insists that Midtown Miami continues to be hot property. She's already entertaining offers from businesses wanting to open in the Liner Shops. "I have five or six concepts that are willing to sign [leases] at this point," she says.

Robert Torres has no intention of moving from 4 Midtown, where he's lived for three years, or to close down Lab Salon, a business he's operated on the ground floor of that same building for four years. "I personally think that Walmart is going to go where it wants to go," he says, "and I think fighting them is futile."

Torres doubts that the Walmart will be any kind of detriment to either his business or his lifestyle in Midtown, no matter what some of his neighbors assert. "I personally will shop there — absolutely," he says. "And I'm sure all my neighbors will, too. Who doesn't want to save some money?"

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

convict in a Florida prison camp, wins a bet to eat 50 hard-boiled eggs in one hour.)

Jocelyne Hider is thrilled that Kunkel has taken over her former property and that New York developer Avra Jain is rehabilitating the shuttered Vagabond Motel across the street.

Hider believes that her business, Memories, which operates in the former Penn Hall Hotel, will prosper once the street is "alive again," but there's another reason she looks forward to seeing the Vagabond and Sunshine motels thriving.

"I am very happy that people with money are doing something with those two beautiful buildings. They are two beautiful old ladies," says Hider, confessing to some regret at the way things turned out. "I kind of feel bad that I didn't pursue the dream of finishing the Sunshine Motel, but you know, in life sometimes you have to go on to other dreams."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

50 Eggs

Continued from page 50

shell," she says of the Sunshine. "There's no electricity, no air-conditioning, nothing."

But the Hiders' renovations did reveal its Art Deco character, which had been hidden by remodels during the 1950s. And although it's still empty, Kunkel has 8000 square feet to play with, and he says the building is in good physical condition. "It's got great bones," he beams.

While Kunkel is working to preserve the building's historic character, including hiring noted architect Allan Shulman, he's not interested in preserving its cheerful moniker. "The name has long been since removed," he says. "If we do name it anything, it will be after the company." (The company name, 50 Eggs, is drawn from the film *Cool Hand Luke*, in which Paul Newman, starring as an irrepressible



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The Open Door

Local culture is alive and well at Bagel Cove, Aventura's most welcoming place

By **Jay Beskin**
BT Contributor

About a year into cityhood, Aventura Mayor Arthur Snyder invited Kenneth Treister to make a presentation before the city commission. Treister, an acclaimed Miami architect and sculptor, was perhaps best known for his design of the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial. (Among many other projects, he also designed and owned the Streets of Mayfair in Coconut Grove.) Snyder wanted to put Aventura on the map.

Treister's proposal was to create a permanent, multicolored laser exhibit in Dumbfoundling Bay, off the tip of 188th Street (the current location of the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center). The installation, it was thought, would attract locals and tourists from far and wide.

Snyder and Treister tried to sell this concept as inspired and imaginative.

Although the presentation was impressive, the commissioners thought the idea odd — and expensive, at about \$2 million. The commission turned it down flat. (I was serving as a commissioner at the time.) Snyder handled this rebuke with the equanimity typical of a seasoned politician. Treister, on the other hand, left the meeting in a complete and obvious huff, probably thinking the commissioners and their constituents were culturally deficient, backward rubes.

If Treister indeed believed that, Aventura would shortly prove him wrong, for the city was about to possess something that would truly shout its cultural character. Aventura — at that time 25,000 people living in an area of 3.2 square miles — would be home to



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Bagel Cove's kitchen door remains open, despite city efforts to close it.

four bookstores: two big-box retailers, Borders and Barnes and Noble, along with Waldenbooks in Aventura Mall and Pierre's Bookstore, located in a strip mall in the city's southern end and catering to French readers and Francophiles.

For Aventura to support one bookstore for every 6250 residents no doubt placed our city near the top of the literacy pyramid in the United States, to the extent bookstores are a measure of such

a thing. For there to be one bookstore for every .8 square miles of city could only mean the residents of Aventura, a high proportion of whom descend from the People of the Book, valued knowledge and scholarship and worldliness.

Those who inveighed their children to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, and teachers would reconfirm their intellectual roots and grant the people of northeast Miami-Dade County access to

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the highest form of cultural experience.

And the bookstores hummed with continuous activity. One could seldom find an empty chair or table at either Borders or Barnes and Noble. Authors would appear for book readings and signings. Parents would bring children to hear storybooks.

But the bookstores did more than sell books. Friends would meet over coffee. Singles met for blind dates. The lonely found solace among similarly situated souls on a Friday or Saturday evening.

The bookstores became indoor urban communal spaces. They were our bars, coffee houses, intellectual salons, after-school programs, and places for the contemplative all rolled into one. That was Aventura's gift to our community.

As of the first of this year, Barnes and Noble closed its doors. It was the last of the four bookstores to go. A notice on its door informs patrons that the nearest Barnes and Noble store is now 12 miles to the north.

Our city now has no bookstores. It's not our fault. The bookstores were victims of e-readers, Amazon, mismanagement, unsustainable rents, redevelopment, or any combination of these.

So if we never got a light sculpture and we don't have bookstores, do we have any other cultural amenities that might distinguish our fair city and show the world that we continue to resist our era's cultural decay?

The answer to that question is an obvious yes. We drive past it every day. It is an open kitchen door not 20 feet from Biscayne Boulevard. Nowhere else along the Biscayne Corridor does such a door exist. It belongs to a deli called Bagel Cove.

Through that door waft aromas of the wonderful, salt-laden, chicken-fat-soaked, artery-hardening, heart-attack-inducing foods on which most of us were weaned: creamed herring, chopped liver, pastrami, brisket, blintzes, knishes, and matzoh brei. (Of course, most don't know the aromas are there because they pass the door in hermetically sealed vehicles. But that's not the point.)

The open door reminds us of those open kitchen doors off the alleyways of Brooklyn's Canarsie or Chicago's Rogers Park, neighborhoods through which flowed the scent of fresh-baked challah and bagels, and just-cooked corned beef and turkey. It seductively invites the passerby to come in and partake of our

cultural heritage, our food; the food that, despite our political affiliations, level of observance, or station in life, binds us all.

Of course, there are many delis in our city besides Bagel Cove — Mo's Bagels & Deli, to name one. The offerings at Mo's are not much different from Bagel Cove or a newer entry in the market, BagelWorks. But Mo's has a more elitist atmosphere. It's where the city's movers and shakers have their power breakfasts and lunches. At Mo's, you'll see politicians, government officials, bankers, developers, and other poo-bahs schmoozing; the kind of people who are featured in the *Aventura News*. Candidates looking for votes almost always glad-hand their way through Mo's.

Bagel Cove caters more to the commoner. Indeed, in a certain respect, it has tried to become the defining Aventura deli. For a long time, its offerings were named for various condos in the city, like the Mystic Pointe, Turnberry, Landmark, and Flamenco sandwiches. No dishes were named for the lower-end condos. Rather, Bagel Cove's sandwiches were aspirational in nature, mirroring the generational longing of our ancestors for the better things in life for their descendants.

Some years ago, the owners of the Aventura Cove Shopping Center, which houses Bagel Cove, sought certain zoning approvals from the city commission. The approvals were granted upon the condition that Bagel Cove close its open kitchen door. The thought was that a city that had expended so much money and effort on the latest in urbanscape design would be blemished by an open kitchen door on Biscayne Boulevard. But the city has never sought to enforce that condition, and perhaps that is as it should be.

The door remains open. It's the only open kitchen door on Biscayne Boulevard, thumbing its nose at its lushly landscaped and manicured surroundings as if to say that is nothing but artifice. As if to say that the true Aventura is what lies inside the door.

That door is our true cultural amenity. It harkens us back to our childhoods and beckons the visitor to share our heritage and look into our souls.

Now all we need is a cheap chop suey joint, preferably one with an open kitchen door.

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Dealing and Wheeling

Luxury car sellers are bumper-to-bumper, waiting to take over a chunk of Biscayne Landing

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Last month we told of seismic transformations coming to Biscayne Landing. Plans have since changed a bit, and the Richter scale could soon go bonkers.

Brace for not one, but four or more new luxury car dealerships at the entrance to Biscayne Landing, on 25 acres along the southeast corner of 151st Street and Biscayne Boulevard. Imagine a group of dealerships, roughly equivalent in design to Lexus of North Miami, guarding the northern entrance to Biscayne Landing from 151st Street, with showrooms up to four stories high and six-story mega-garages protecting

precious inventory from the weather.

Imagine one of those mega-garages across the street from the existing parking structure for the twin 25-story, 381-unit Oaks Towers and you start to get the picture.

And that's just one piece of the new — and significantly revised — master plan sent to City of North Miami staff in late January and coming up before the planning and zoning commission on March 5.

“Auto dealerships want to be here,” says Herb Tillman, hands-on director of Oleta Partners’ Biscayne Landing project and vice president of Swerdlow Group developers. “We are trying to develop a closer relationship with city officials. These guys for the most part are trying to bend over backwards to make this program work.”



The latest plan for Biscayne Landing clusters several car dealerships (shaded violet) in the northwest corner of the property.

The word is that interested parties include Prestige Imports, right across the street from Biscayne Landing, where you can lease a new Lamborghini for \$2377 a month, give or take; a South Florida Cadillac dealership eager to expand; a dealer selling the newly refurbished Lincoln luxury brand; and one of the automotive conglomerates with several dealerships along U.S. 441 in Miami Gardens, near the county line. More could be in the wings.

Nothing is final, and all the dealers are said to be in talks with manufacturers to get approval to open in 2015. For them the location is ideal: reasonably handy to the beach, I-95, and Aventura, and between the 123rd Street and 163rd Street causeways. That's central for all those Latin American, European, and Russian condo buyers.

Prestige Imports, headed by 25-year-old Brett David (who took over when his father, Irv David, died of a heart attack six

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years ago), has been the most successful Audi dealership in the nation since 2006. So dearly did Prestige want the southeast corner that early last spring, while the deal with developer Michael Swerdlow and his Oleta Partners group was in question, David presented the city with a \$14 million check and a prepared contract to buy the 200-year land-lease from the city.

Whether the check was real or symbolic, the city didn't take it. Instead, Swerdlow and Oleta got all 181 acres of the land and are now doing the selling.

One big and largely unnoticed turning point happened January 22, when the city commission, with little discussion on second reading, voted 5-0 to lift restrictions on car dealerships operating on developments of more than 30 acres, which in North Miami means only one thing: Biscayne Landing.

Here's where it gets interesting. Suppose you have four car dealerships on 25 acres. Oleta Partners is ready to sell the 200-year lease rights for about \$1.5 million per acre along the Boulevard and about \$750,000 per acre inland, for an average of about \$1 million per acre. In other words, with four dealerships, Oleta Partners would get \$25 million.

What kind of deal is that for Oleta? Sweet.

Remember that Oleta wired \$17.5 million to the city August 20, suddenly making North Miami solvent rather than nearly bankrupt. Add \$1 million-plus in professional and maintenance fees paid to the City of North Miami, \$1.5 million for the first year's rent, and another \$1.5 million in back taxes, and that leaves Oleta out roughly \$21.5 million.

So if Oleta sells the land lease to four car dealerships for \$25 million-plus, for example, it comes out around \$4 million ahead.

That beats being \$17.5 million behind, but Tillman says any profit would get plowed right back into the projected \$30 million expense for land preparation, lights, electricity, sewers, and the spine road that are part of the billion-dollar development.

And what about that seven-acre lake with surrounding greenery that you pass when driving to the Oaks Towers condos from 151st Street?

Answer: No more lake. Those 12 acres would be paved over for car dealerships. Last month we said the lake would remain. Well, money talks and plans change. Now dog walkers, mothers with strollers, and

joggers would pass car dealerships rather than a lake with greensward. (The lake, although burnt ochre in appearance and part of the old Munisport landfill, does have ducks, egrets, turtles, and fish.)

Consider Biscayne Landing, then, as a sandwich, with car dealerships and the Oaks Towers on top and big-box stores at the bottom, with those parts handled by Swerdlow Group, developer of Hollywood's Oakwood Plaza (which the lower portion would resemble).

In the middle, you could get as many as 3400 midrange apartments in buildings of 8 to 25 stories in height, developed by the venerable LeFrak Organization of New York, builders of the vast LeFrak City apartments in Corona, Queens, and much else. Imagine the Oaks Towers at Biscayne Landing multiplied by nine, plus parking.

LeFrak operates big and the rental market is tight. Home loans are tough to get and not about to get much easier, as banks face tightening capital requirements over the next five years. That means Miami will continue to have plenty of cash-strapped renters for reasonably well-appointed, if not lavish, midrange apartments for households making, say, \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year.

Sizes would not be quite as cavernous as the 1600- to 2000-square-foot Oaks apartments, but 1000-square-foot units with laminate rather than granite and midrange appliances would do many well enough.

Instead of the park around the lake, the master plan calls for 37 acres of open space, 17 acres of which would be in the form of parks. Most of that acreage would be situated in the residential section.

As a resident of the Oaks, I must admit to a certain pause. Will life be more jumbled and dystopian? Traffic at the corner of 151st and Biscayne would undoubtedly worsen considerably, particularly around already hellish school-zone hours. A light would seem a necessity at the Biscayne Landing entrance at 151st Street, although it is less than 600 feet east of the Boulevard.

But at the Oaks, we still have one great consolation: protected wetlands to the east, with views of the swampy woods from the lower floors and of Sunny Isles towers and the ocean beyond from the floors above.

So if car dealerships and mega-garages block the sunset, we still keep our sunrise.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Mass Intransigence

Even as transportation options expand, the Shores seems stuck in the past

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

In January, my students at Miami Arts Charter School and I were invited to participate in the March 8-9 opening of the Purple Transit Line station. Located beneath the I-195 overpass at NE 2nd Avenue and 36th Street, the station offers art, poetry, music, and even a café passengers can enjoy while they wait for their bus or other mode of public transportation.

There's only one problem: The Purple Transit Line and the station don't really exist.

While my students will be composing poetry for it — along the lines of what the

Poetry in Motion campaign does for New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority — the project is actually an art installation, the message of which is obvious: In a metro area of 2.5 or so million residents, mass public transportation, built in a civic and creative manner, has become increasingly necessary.

Our involvement with the Purple Line project has, as it is intended to do for everyone in Miami, made me think. And I have plenty of time for that. Nearly every day on my way to drop off or pick up my kids at school, I'm trapped behind an endless cargo train traveling the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC). At night, insomniac that I am, the nearby train whistles awaken me at least twice.



Pipe dream: Is it asking too much that the Shores have something like this?

I doubt I would find this as frustrating if rail service were an option for residents of Miami Shores. Given that the tracks run through the center of the village, it would make sense to have a station where commuters could easily hop on a train and be in downtown Miami, Fort Lauderdale, or even Orlando in time-saving comfort that also reduces noise pollution and improves air quality.

But easy train travel, whether for business or tourist reasons, probably will not be an option for residents of Miami Shores. Despite operable, clean-fuel plans from both the Florida Department of Transportation and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) — which operates Tri-Rail — to co-develop routes along the FEC right-of-way, as well as private companies seeking to install passenger trains,

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the village will not likely be among the proposed station sites.

The FEC's "All Aboard Florida" proposal calls for a quiet, high-speed route from Orlando to Miami, with the closest station to Miami Shores located in either Opa-locka or the Golden Glades, and the one for Tri-Rail's Blue Line route in Aventura.

As Miami becomes even more congested, Biscayne Boulevard traffic backs up practically onto our lawns, and it takes an hour to travel ten minutes, it's clear that something is going to happen. No matter who succeeds in securing funds and approval, more FEC tracks (and improved tracks) are needed for the railways to expand from freight to passenger service. So like it or not, we can expect rail construction to commence in the Shores at some point in the next two years, as the FEC is planning to have the Miami-to-Orlando "All Aboard Florida" route operational by 2014.

After that, many more trains will be coming through. Aside from the potential increase in driving delays from construction and train traffic, rail lines will not likely impact Miami Shores negatively or positively. But shouldn't they?

Between Publix and the series of homes and churches on the west side of the existing tracks, we have unused land where litter collects and stray animals make their hideouts. Much of that is FEC-owned property. Why not petition them and the developers of the rail lines to put this land to good use, fight for a station and a stop to be placed here?

Okay, I know that's wishful thinking. For one thing, the FEC hasn't even installed safe pedestrian crossings on our tracks; I cringe every time I see someone hauling groceries over the tracks by Publix, or jogging over the tracks on NE 96th Street.

Plus we don't even have a viable downtown, owing mostly to a lack of sewage connections and concerns that too much of a good thing (restaurants, retail) will attract rowdy crowds that will overrun our little community. So I can't see how village leaders would support a rail station, even if we did make it an architectural gem and decorate it through local art and literacy initiatives — or even if it did bring us the benefits of foot traffic, revenue, and increased home values.

Of course, to build a station, we'd also have to create a parking lot, as denizens of neighboring towns will want to take the train from here, just as some of us will want to board in Aventura. And maybe there's just not enough land for that — though that stumbling block, too, could be overcome. Add on to the top of Publix, for instance, where there's already a parking structure.

Oh, but the cost! The eyesore! So maybe we can look at installing other options, such as courting environmentally friendly car-sharing companies like Car2Go, whose tiny vehicles I see on the street, available for rent all over downtown, Brickell, Edgewater, the Design District, and the Upper Eastside.

But even if we never get a train station here — and I can accept that it's a pipe dream — Miami Shores residents would do well to start thinking about how we might get to a station without driving our own cars there and adding to, instead of decreasing, congestion and pollution on our main corridors. (I use the plural lightly.)

One word (or is it two?): DecoBike.

A bike-sharing system that is already in effect in Miami Beach and Surfside

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What do DecoBikes not have? A home in Miami Shores, where, though we have cars and bikes of our own, we barely have parking spaces or bike racks, let alone a car- or bike-sharing program. Or a train station.

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Hard Lessons

When it comes to protecting our schoolchildren, we need a bunker mentality

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

A most horrific incident occurred to close out 2012. Yes, I'm speaking of the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. The crime took the lives of 20 children and 6 adults at the school, as well as the life of the shooter's mother, bringing the total to 27 senseless killings — 28, if you count the shooter taking his own life.

Before this shooting, we were all horrified by the shooting in the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater that took 12 lives. In that incident, the shooter, James Eagan Holmes, was captured after his

semi-automatic weapon jammed. Too bad he did not resist and save the state of Colorado a ton of money for his defense and probable incarceration, which will stretch on for years to come.

These incidents, along with the shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, have brought the issue of gun control to the forefront one more time. Actually, the term "gun control" is a fantasy, or an oxymoron at best. Regardless of whatever legislation eventually passes — if any — it will do very little to control the illegal use of these weapons.

The reality is that law-abiding individuals will follow the new legislation and the scofflaws will continue to obtain these weapons and perpetrate even more



horrific acts in a perverse game of "Can you top this?"

First, the weapons being used in these cases are not technically assault weapons. Assault weapons are defined as firearms that will fire in the fully automatic mode (like a machine gun or a military-issued M16) with a single pull of the trigger, the weapon continuing to

discharge until all the ammunition has been spent.

Those weapons are already illegal to possess, so now the need is to look at semiautomatic weapons (which fire only one bullet per pull of the trigger, but automatically reload between shots; the majority of guns purchased in the United States are semiautomatic). In

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truth, a semi-automatic weapon is deadlier — more accurate — in the hands of a trained gunman than a fully automatic weapon. I saw the damage a combat rifle can inflict in Vietnam and, worse yet, the look on someone's face when they know they're seconds away from being on the receiving end of a bullet.

The horror of Sandy Hook just boggles the mind. Who knows what magnificent discoveries may have been erased by the deaths of these innocent children? Was there a Jonas Salk, a Steve Jobs, a Madame Curie, or maybe even another Einstein? We will never know. This, too, boggles the mind, does it not? Besides their lives, what other gifts may have been taken from us all on that fateful day?

So how do we fix it? Well, from my perspective, it is probably not by passing more gun legislation or by increasing the emphasis on mental health. Both are admirable goals, but suffice to say, those bent on this type of activity will probably still slip through the cracks. Friends of the perpetrator will continue to be astonished, relaying to the news media how Johnny was quiet and somewhat shy. Not

many friends, but no, never really had a problem, nothing that would make you think he could do something like this.

How many people like this do we know who never became serial killers or mass murderers? Finding the ones who could snap violently is like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack, don't you think?

I view these incidents pragmatically and accept that they will continue, and possibly escalate, in the foreseeable future. Therefore I believe that, to stop similar incidents in our schools, the buildings themselves must be hardened beyond what is currently planned.

And by the way, the idea from the National Rifle Association of arming our teachers is beyond ludicrous, as aptly pointed out by former Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Octavio Visiedo in his January 1 "Readers' Forum" piece in the *Herald*.

(Think back to the kindergarten teachers your children had and focus on one who made a particular impact on your child. Then imagine that person with an automatic weapon firing at an assailant hell-bent on wiping out a

classroom full of kids. It's an asinine thought, to say the least.)

Then there is the plea for more officers for the school system's police department, as expressed in the "Readers' Forum" on December 30 by Howard Giraldo, president of the local union that represents those police officers. Would it be helpful to have a full-time officer in each school — or would it be an exercise in futility? They would, in a Newtown-style scenario, be facing a heavily armed assailant with the element of surprise on his side. Perhaps we would need two police officers to mount a counter-assault. Or would we need three?

You see where this could lead. A SWAT team in each school might make us feel like our kids are safer, but it would not be a cost-effective use of personnel.

No, I think the answer is in hardening the school buildings so a potential attacker cannot make entry without having to run the gauntlet, so to speak. We have a unique opportunity to do this in Miami-Dade in that we, the voters, just passed a billion-dollar capital projects initiative for our schools.

What we need to do is earmark those dollars to include whatever plant improvements are necessary to make the schools impenetrable: bulletproof glass in all street-level windows and doors (not hurricane-impact windows — *bulletproof glass*), poured concrete walls for the first floor (not concrete blocks that could allow the penetration of high-powered projectiles), and a bulletproof reception vestibule.

In the case of the last, once a visitor enters, he or she would be screened via remote methods, by metal detectors and x-ray machines, much like at airports. If anything suspicious is detected or observed, the visitor would be locked in the vestibule until the arrival of the police.

This is certainly not a pleasant topic to write on and not particularly pleasant to read, but we need to embrace realistic measures to keep our children safe — and hold our officials accountable for implementing those measures. There's no reason we can't provide our schoolchildren the same level of protection we've come to expect every time we board an airplane.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Coloring in the Past

The Vasari Project seeks to document Miami's long underappreciated art history

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

The idea to document Miami's art history might be traced back to the year 1550, when Italian Giorgio Vasari published what many consider the first book on the history of art. Vasari is also credited with being the first to formally use the term "Renaissance" to describe what he was chronicling, particularly in Florence.

Okay, so Miami and Florence aren't usually uttered in the same breath, but even that fabulous Tuscan art center had to start somewhere, and someone had to make sure the world would remember its origins and achievements.

So back in the 1980s, historian and art critic for the *Miami Herald* Helen Kohen and Barbara Young, director of art services for the Miami-Dade Public Library, began mulling over how to assemble the art history of a town that was coming into its own as a cultural center, but had little to physically document its transformation.

"I realized if no one wrote about it, maybe it didn't 'happen,'" says Kohen, who has since retired from the *Herald* but remains active in the art world. "Or if it was written about, maybe people only saw what was in the newspaper, and maybe that one mention was wrong."

Kohen and Young decided to focus on collecting artifacts through donations, beginning with items from the postwar years, as that's when Miami's population (and eventual personality) really bloomed. And they decided to concentrate on as much original, primary source material as they could find.

Thus the Vasari Project was born.

But like any other venture, it needed funding. The library system and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs stepped in and, in 2000, the project set up shop in a small office in the main library downtown. A determined collecting and cataloguing initiative began.

"Oh, I went to every artists' meeting, every dog-and-pony show out there" to advertise the project and get people to start donating, recalls Kohen. Some of the initial treasure trove of items came from people who had been influential in the Miami art scene in the postwar period and who were retiring or moving into smaller living spaces.

Kohen was not interested in people self-editing what they had; she wanted it all, no matter how inconsequential it might seem to others. Asked if she's made weeding out repetitive items a priority, she says just the opposite: "I could gather 40 postcards for the same event!"

It might come as a surprise that there is no art here. Vasari is not an art collection. The boxes and shelves are filled with letters, press clippings, photographs, and gallery announcements. Those involved in the project have also transcribed and recorded oral histories from various people.

Kohen points out that printed materials and even things such as slides (or microfiche) can be in various stages of degradation. More and more stuff started to pour in as more people heard about Vasari. The cataloguing process became intense.

Interestingly, the material is mostly organized by donor. Although that could seem cumbersome for a novice who wants to start digging, in fact it brings a holistic approach to discovering Miami history. For instance, materials from a defunct gallery or institution might expose some forgotten trend that a simple search for an artist might not turn up.

Or donations from a particular individual might reveal the fascinating lives of those who loved art. Kohen remembers one such person, a woman who worked for travel magazines in the first part of the 20th Century, illustrating what were then exotic places, such as the jungles of Central America. She was



The Vasari Project includes documentation of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands* (1983).



Christo distributed checks like this to volunteers who helped with *Surrounded Islands*.



Project co-founder Barbara Young with the library's Artmobile, circa 1976.

married five times and eventually wound up in Miami, donating her collected items to Vasari.

Others were instrumental in getting the project up and running, such as

artists Margarita Cano and Cesar Trasobares. Eventually Vasari would need more room, which it recently got, and Kohen passed the reins to Denise Delgado in 2011, although the ever-energetic Kohen remains actively involved.

Delgado, who had worked with the library's art services, collections, and exhibitions of-fices, sits surrounded by boxes in the expanded space, which is open two days a week (but also by appointment). She says that, through her involvement with Vasari, she has come to understand Miami's distinct cultural development, noting that our patterns of immigration and of philanthropic support and interest are specific to our semi-tropical, transient-heavy part of the country.

One of the highlights she points out: documentation of all the negotiations

that took place to get Christo and Jeanne-Claude here to “surround” Biscayne Bay’s islands in hot-pink fabric in 1983. One example is a check for one dollar, sent to a volunteer on the project. (Those checks would become little artistic mementos of the event.)

A favorite piece of Kohen’s is the original birth certificate of Miami’s most famous outsider artist, the late Purvis Young. “His real name,” she notes, “was ‘Previous’ Young.”

One of the latest acquisitions has come from the estate of Paula Harper, an art historian, writer, and professor at the University of Miami who died last spring. Stuffed into the 18 cartons that were delivered to Vasari are articles by Harper, clippings, “and her personal correspondence with the family of Camille Pissarro,” says Kohen. Harper co-authored one of the major biographies of the French



T-shirts bearing artwork created by Carlos Alfonzo and Sandy Winters for “Art Against Aids” (1989).

Impressionist, and is considered a pioneer in feminist studies of art history.

The donation underscores the unique aspect of this project. Vasari is not a book compilation or film about art or artists in Miami. It is far more varied and diverse than that. Miami’s art history



Self-portrait by Giorgio Vasari, the world’s first art historian and namesake of the Miami project.

— and art-making — is the product of an influx of personalities, ethnicities, and backgrounds that can’t really be found anywhere else.

In fact, these quirky bits and pieces that tell the tale add to Miami’s complex and rich history, one that Kohen says is too

often belittled and misunderstood. “Just because it wasn’t documented doesn’t mean it didn’t exist,” she says. “Since [Miami’s] founding, there has always been art. There have always been rich people here, visitors with money, and they want art on their walls. John Singer Sargent [the major American portrait painter] worked here at Vizcaya” in the early 20th Century.

But the Miami of today is much larger, with international cachet in the art world, which is why the Vasari Project will take on an ever-expanding mission. Yet it will still welcome the minutiae. “We feel that every bit that is left here becomes part of our history,” says Kohen.

The Vasari Project is open to the public by appointment only Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the main library, 101 W. Flagler St., Miami. Call 305-375-1550 or e-mail vasari@mdpls.org.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



Stephen Kaiser in *The Love of Three Oranges*
Photo by Favel Antenor, 2010

the love of three oranges

by carlo gozzi

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www.bacfl.org
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BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL

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 DWNTWN ArtHouse
www.basfisherinvitational.com
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 "Beach Painting Club" by Tyson Reeder

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www.blacksquaregallery.com
 Through February 5:
 "Scribe's House" by Pablo Lehmann

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www.borinquenhealth.org
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www.bridgeredstudios.com
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Judith Page, June 26 (Boom Box and Beaver), back view, tar gel and mixed media, 2010, at Bridge Red Gallery.

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www.ideobox.com
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170-C NW 24th St., Miami
786-333-8404
www.oncearts.com
Ongoing:
Pablo Gentile, Jaime Montana, Jaime Apraez, and Patricia Chaparro

OXENBERG FINE ART

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-854-7104
www.oxenbergart.com
Through February 18:
"The Artist's Accomplice: Paintings and Monumental Studies" by Cesar Santos
Reception February 9, 1 to 3 p.m.

PAN AMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through March 2:
"Gimrack" by Ted Larsen



Santiago Villanueva, s.t. 40, polystyrene, resin, paint, and lacquer, 2013, at Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts.

"Fairy Tales" by Carolina Sardi
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
www.primaryprojectspace.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

PROJECTS GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Ste 208, Miami
267-303-9652
www.projectsgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

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2349 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-397-8530
www.robertfontainegallery.com
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305-441-2005
www.artnet.com/sammergallery.html
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SPINELLO PROJECTS

2930 NW 7th Ave., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinelloprojects.com
February 14 through April 6:
"LOVELIKETHETHEUNIVERSE" by Sinisa Kukec

Reception February 14, 7 to 10 p.m.

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

150 NE 42nd St., Miami
http://swampspace.blogspot.com/
swampstyle@gmail.com
February 9 through March 9:
"House of Desire" with Lea Nickless, and Conrad Hamather
Reception February 9, 6 to 10 p.m.

TONY WYNN MODERN ART GALLERY

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

THE LUNCH BOX GALLERY

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305-407-8131
www.thelunchboxgallery.com
Through February 2:
"Craters" by Michael G. Zimmerer
"Objectified" with Henry Hargreaves, Linus Morales, José Joaquín Figueroa, and Rodolfo Vanmarcke

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305-978-4437

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www.as.miami.edu/art
February 4 through 22:
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Ongoing:
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MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

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800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
Through February 17:
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BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through March 17:
"The Endless Renaissance: Six Solo Artist Projects" with Eija Liisa Ahtila, Barry X Ball, Walead Beshty, Hans Peter Feldmann, Ged Quinn, and Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook

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Through February 24:
"To Beauty: A Tribute to Mike Kelley" with various artists
Through April 14:
"Race and Visual Culture under National Socialism" with various artists
Through May 20:
"American Sculpture in the Tropics" with John Henry, Albert Paley, Dennis Oppenheim, Chakaia Booker, and Verina Baxter

LEGAL ART

1035 N. Miami Ave., Suite 200, Miami
www.legalartmiami.org
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LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535
www.lowemuseum.org
Through February 10:
"Sainly Blessings: A Gift of Mexican Retablos from Joseph and Janet Shein" with various artists
Through March 24:



Chase Westfall, *Agnes*, oil on linen, 2013, at 101/Exhibit.

"Infinite Mirror: Images of American Identity" with various artists
"New Light" by Stephen Knapp
Through April 21:
"Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East Encounters West, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Art" with various artists

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-3000
www.miamiartmuseum.org
Ongoing:
"Between Here and There: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection"
Through May 12:
"New Work Miami 2013" with various artists, curated by Rene Morales and Diana Nawi

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through March 3:
"Liber Insularum" by Bill Viola

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
Through April 28:
Anselm Kiefer, Richard Long, William Tucker, Simryn Gill, Doug Aitken, David Ellis, Roberto Lange, Kader Attia, Nathalie Djurberg, Leandro Erlich, Sabelo Mlangeni, Barbara Probst, and Wael Shawky, curated by Katherine Hinds

THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami
305-573-6090
http://rfc.museum
Through August 2:
"Alone Together" with various artists

VIZCAYA MUSEUM AND GARDEN

3251 S. Miami Ave., Miami
305-250-9133
www.vizcayamuseum.org
Through March 18:
"The Light Club of Vizcaya: A Women's Picture" by Josiah McElheny

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Compiled by Melissa Wallen
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Love and Hate in the Shores

Some misguided sense of nostalgia could have a few longing for the 1950s, but our country's diversity has become an integral part of our makeup in 2013. So isn't it time for a more in-depth talk about our diversity in love? Playwright and actress Christina Alexander thinks so, which is why she's putting on her one-woman play, where she inhabits eight different characters who deliver 16 monologues about love in *Hate! An American Love Story*. Over three weekends (on Fridays and Saturdays) beginning on **Friday, February**

8 at 8:00 p.m., *Hate* takes the stage at the Miami Theater Center (9816 NE Second Ave.). Tickets cost \$20. Go to www.mtcmiami.org.

Here and Now, Still

Once upon a time, before the arts became a respectable engine for the growth of Miami, there was Miami Light Project's **Here and Now** festival, which nurtured new Miami talent (back when "Miami talent" was thought to be an oxymoron). Here and Now gave locals a leg up, and many of them are now standing tall and proud. For two weeks, from **Thursday, February 7, through Saturday, February 16**, at the Light Box at Goldman Warehouse (404 NW 26th St.) at 8:00 p.m., the latest commissions will be performed, including from previously highlighted choreographer Liony Garcia. Cost is \$25. Go to www.miamilightproject.com.

Chili in the Air

There's no way Texas should have a monopoly on chili. *We've got spice, we've got beans!* Pinecrest Gardens realized this, which is why it has launched the **Chili Cook-Off**. On **Sunday, February 10**, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., restaurants and caterers will bring their own recipes, and so will average South Floridians. The event will include music, beer, line dancing, and, of course, lots of chili tasting. It's \$15 for big people, \$5 for kids under 12. Call 305-669-6990 or go to www.pinecrest-fl.gov.

All About the Art

It may seem as though all those fairs that surround Art Basel have just barely left town, but then that's the whole point of the second **Art Wynwood Fair**. All alone on the calendar, the fair wants to make seeing and buying art a less frenzied activity. Not having to compete with dozens of other attractions during Basel is a plus, as are the 70 international galleries offering up a comprehensive one-stop shop. Organized by the people behind Art Miami, this fair will run from **Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18**, from noon till evening. (Check www.art-wynwood.com for exact times.) One-day passes are \$15 at the Art Miami Pavilion, 3101 NE 1st Ave.

The Great Hispanic Way

Hispanic Americans helped re-elect President Obama, and a Cuban-American became the first Hispanic to read a poem at a presidential inauguration, so why not celebrate the Hispanic influence on Broadway? *Canciones de Broadway* does just that. Puerto Rican singer Carla Bordonada reprises such Broadway standards as *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina* and *The Impossible Dream*, which came from musicals that had Hispanic protagonists, but are universally popular. Bordonada sings **Friday, February 15,**

and Saturday, February 16, at 8:00 p.m. at the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center (3385 NE 188th St.). Tickets cost \$34.50. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Encore

When the Haitian dance company **Ayikodans** performed here two years ago, so soon after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, critics and dance lovers thought it might have been one of the best performances they'd ever seen. Now the Adrienne Arsht Center, which co-sponsored that performance, is bringing Ayikodans back to celebrate the company's 25th anniversary, with a new production that includes the full ensemble of dancers, drummers, and vocalists. If you missed them the first time, here's your chance to see them, from **Friday, February 15, through Sunday, February 17**. Admission is \$35. For times and tickets, go to www.arshtcenter.org.

If These Walls Could Talk

You might be aware that Wynwood has more graffiti art than almost any other neighborhood in the world, both commissioned and illegal, made by famous artists and anonymous taggers. But have you really taken a *close* look? Building after building has some of the most colorful and creative murals



Can't Stop the Kites

The skies are clear, the temperature just about perfect this time of year, so why not fly a kite? The 20th annual **Kite Day** at Haulover Park (10800 Collins Ave.) takes place on **Sunday, February 17**, from noon to 5:00 p.m. Bring your own or buy one at the kite trailer, but remember that these days the colorful objects in flight can be works of art. There might be a 100-foot flying squid, or a 30-foot Nemo fish. (This year's theme is Caribbean kites.) There will be kite-making demonstrations and competitions, plus food vendors. Admission is free; parking costs \$6. Call the park at 305-947-3525.

anywhere, many with intriguing stories behind them. The inaugural **Wynwood History of Graffiti Bike Tour** from HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.) will be a great way to explore this unique art form. Bikes roll on **Monday, February 18** (a federal holiday, Presidents' Day), from 10:00 a.m. till noon. Cost is \$20 for members, \$30 for nonmembers. Call 305-375-1621.

Bang the Drums and Sticks Loudly

As the Broadway hit *Stomp* once showed us, who needs guitars and other distractions when enjoying music? The **Nakatani Gong Orchestra** certainly doesn't. Headed by Japanese-born composer Tatsuya Nakatani, this company employs drums and cymbals to make its sound, but also bowls, bells, sticks, and kitchen utensils. Tigertail Productions is bringing this novel act (which will be joined by some locals) to the Miami-Dade County Auditorium (2901 W. Flagler St.) on **Saturday, February 23**, at 8:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$25. Go to www.tigertail.org.

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



A Madness to Their Method

Method acting has always carried certain connotations; is it the way to bring submerged feelings to a performance, or is it a pretentious self-indulgence? To help answer that question (or not), the highly acclaimed troupe out of Austin, Texas, the Rude Mechs, will present *The Method Gun* at the Colony Theatre (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach) on **Friday, February 8, and Saturday, February 9**, at 8:00 p.m. In this production — a satirical and experimental take on what performance is and can be — a rogue cast decides to bring its method to *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Tickets cost \$25. Call 305-237-3010.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Time to Really Think About Quitting

200 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

For the smoker, nothing goes better with a meal than that post-dinner puff. This person couldn't wait for the check, so he went outside to appease his deadly addiction. Knowing he was coming back, he left his cell phone on the table. It was stolen within minutes. There is video surveillance of the thief, but phone calls placed to him have not been returned.

Grandma and Grandpa Get Taken

1200 Block of NE 83rd Street

An elderly couple welcomed their granddaughter into their home because she claimed she needed to take a shower.

While the couple watched television, they curiously did *not* hear the shower running. They searched the house only to find their garage door opened. And with the open door came the realization that their generator had been stolen. The couple believes the granddaughter had help — likely, her scummy boyfriend. No arrests have been made at press time.

A Happy Ending for Crooks

200 Block of NE 71st Street

Two potential customers walked into a massage parlor to inquire about rates and services. One asked to use the restroom. The employee on duty walked him over there. When she returned to the front

desk, the other man was gone, as was a laptop computer. The employee attempted to chase after him, but he got away. At this point, the man who had been in the restroom was at the front desk, burrowing through the drawers. He eventually left. The whole incident was caught on camera. No arrests at press time.

An Eye for the Finer Things

8000 Block of NE 1st Avenue

Crooks nowadays have many sides to them. Some are mere ruffians who employ a scorched-earth strategy, while others just want the finer things in life. This perpetrator broke into a vacant home and promptly stole a



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chandelier. We gather his reasoning was that no one was currently enjoying it, so why let it go to waste? He made his entrance by breaking the side window and exiting the front door. Nothing else was touched.

The Sweet Smell of Loot

600 Block of NE 39th Street

A flower shop owner was in the process of paying his driver. He placed \$80 on the counter and walked away. The driver was not yet present, but later they both looked at the surveillance video and saw a well-known homeless man creep his way into the business and snatch the money away. The homeless gentleman is recognizable to the business owner because he often goes through the garbage and removes discarded flowers. This time, flowers apparently were not enough. A warrant has been issued.

A Flood of Crime

100 Block of NE 39th Street

With old man winter upon us, many Floridians are looking for ways to beat the cold. (We are admittedly wimps in

this regard.) Well, instead of buying a water heater, this criminal elected to steal one from a building. He was not successful, but he did sever the building's pipes, causing almost \$2 million in water damage to the property. As a result, those poor people in the building will now have to bear the brunt of our bone-rattling 65-degree weather. As Jimmy Carter famously once said: Time to break out the sweaters.

This Crook Had to Go Bad

100 Block of NE 54th Street

If you want to use the restroom at a public establishment, you must be a customer; at least that is what we are told. But there's another way. A person broke into a business, then broke a hole in a wall leading to the restroom of an adjacent business. He proceeded to defecate in the toilet, and did not have the courtesy to flush. The owner noticed the odor immediately, but the mystery man was gone. While several items were stolen, the police report does not indicate what those items were. We're guessing toilet paper and fragrance spray are the likely items missing.

Cops Say Scam Didn't Work, Ask for Refund

1700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Returning items has always been a Boulevard scam, but this one was just plain stupid. Under video surveillance, a man walked empty-handed into a store and grabbed a 12-cup coffee maker. He placed it in a plastic store bag he had brought with him (subtle) and went to the customer service desk in an effort to "return" it. The fact he had no receipt and was carrying the coffee maker in a ratty bag aroused some suspicion. The coffee maker, valued at \$90, was promptly entered as evidence as the loss-prevention officer had observed the shenanigans. The man was arrested.

Thievery Made Easy

NE 1st Avenue and NE 5th Street

Looking for that cheap Mac? Wiser to pay full price. A man responded to an ad on Craig's List for a MacBook Pro computer and via text messages negotiated a \$500 price. The seller provided the location where the deal was going to go down. When the victim entered the man's car, the seller produced a black handgun

and demanded the money. He also took the victim's wallet. He then ordered the hapless buyer out of the car. A struggle ensued and the buyer was able to grab a black bag from the car (it did not belong to him but we guess that is tit for tat). After throwing his victim out of the car, the perpetrator raced off. Arrests have not been made, but be forewarned about the unregulated ease of Craig's List.

Oh, Yes, It's Losers' Night

7005 Biscayne Boulevard

Oh, the Jamboree Lounge, a place for dimly lit decadence; just buy a drink and head to the backroom, guys. There is a cover charge, though, and this particular gent did not want to pay. When confronted by the doorman after entering, the patron pulled out a gun and robbed the doorman of the lounge's loot. He even took the doorman's keys and cell phone for good measure. A warning to all our lecherous Miami denizens: If you are in that dark room, you may end up holding something that will actually shoot back, but not in the way you expect.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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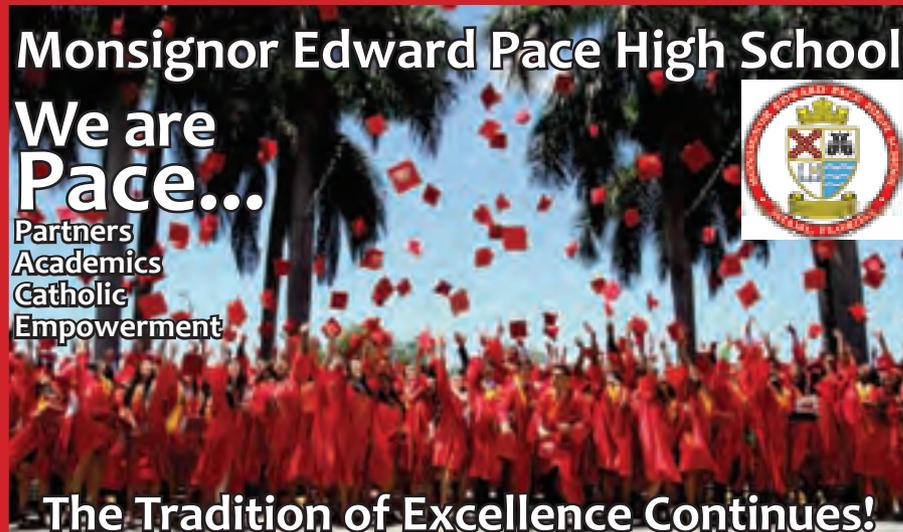
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A Green Space, Recycled

Once a forest, Biscayne Gardens Park is now a fairly welcoming, if somewhat oddly situated, suburban oasis

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Last month I was taking my dead Christmas tree to one of the county's official recycling centers when, lo and behold, I saw arising in the east a park — a park called Biscayne Gardens Park.

I wondered, what are you doing here? You, the park, I mean. Not me, the observer. I was clearly there to grab some free mulch made from discarded Christmas trees.

Where exactly was I? Nearly in the shadow of the concrete pretzel known as the Golden Glades, this combination recycling center/walking park belongs to Miami-Dade County, and the surrounding Biscayne Gardens neighborhood remains an unincorporated section of the county (with plans afoot to change that status). It is primarily residential, with quite a few large, undeveloped lots, which by default makes it a greener space than most other local neighborhoods.

Biscayne Gardens Park is an interesting experiment. Not many years ago, these three acres were covered by a forest composed mainly of invasive

Australian pines, as I recall from previous trips to the recycling center. It is unclear why the county chose to develop this lot into a park. My repeated phone messages inquiring into this went unreturned. (The park has no direct phone line; it shares a number with nearby Oak Grove Park.)

The name of the park and neighborhood lends itself to confusion. Both are located far west of other “Biscaynes,” namely, the Bay and Boulevard (and, for that matter, the Village of Biscayne Park). Furthermore, another nearby county park shares a similar name: Biscayne Shores and Gardens Park. With so many “Biscaynes” and “Gardens” floating around, one could be excused for feeling disoriented.

Now for the double-take: This newer park, Biscayne Gardens Park, looks almost exactly like the older Biscayne Shores and Gardens Park. They are nearly identical in size and perfectly rectangular, and both have a circular path in the middle that surrounds a crop of towering royal palms. The main difference is that one is located near Biscayne Boulevard, and the other one is located near I-95.

Another common trait shared by the nearly twin parks is flooding. According



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

Sabal palms, mature Royal Palms, native shrubs, pathways, and lots of open space.

to my informant, Carol Helene, a resident of the neighborhood since 1950 and a member of the Biscayne Gardens Civic Association (and a dedicated *BT* reader), the park floods after every rain. I didn't see this effect during my visits in the dry month of January, but I have seen the floods at Biscayne Shores and Gardens, so it's easy to visualize. Just imagine big puddles in the grass, and you're there. (Now these parks are *really* starting to feel alike — creepy).

Flooding would actually be helpful to the smallish cypress trees in Biscayne Gardens Park, because some of them look brown and overly dry. But most of the native plants look healthy, and they form the park's main attraction.

In this part of Miami-Dade, it is rare to see so many native plants together.

In this park, it might also be rare to see people. Helene was not aware of the level of foot traffic in the park, but from my observations it appears very lightly trod. Besides the trees, there's not much to see.

Helene says the park did not meet many of the civic association's requests for additional amenities. The association wanted a gazebo and restrooms, but what they got was a grass field, a walking trail, and a dense mass of native plants.

Sounds like a nice place to walk the dog, right? It was — until some residents complained,



Name that tree: Who among BT readers can identify this specimen?

according to Helene, and now the park has signs to scare away potential dog walkers. Too bad, as there is plenty of space for everyone.

Back to the collection of native plants. There is one very striking tree that I do not recognize. It has bright red berries and stands about 15 feet high. It's probably some type of holly tree (and definitely not an invasive Brazilian pepper), but I cannot recall seeing this tree anywhere else. Would a kind horticulturalist please visit the park and identify these trees?

The huge royal palms must have been growing here for decades, as they are well above any height that would allow them to be transported. It's nice to see that existing native trees were maintained on the property, while the exotic trees were ditched. Around the

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Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: No
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



Neighbors wanted a gazebo and restrooms, but ended up with grassy areas that flood.



Neighbors also wanted to walk their dogs, but others protested, so no animals, period.



Should you get lost trying to find your way to Golden Glades, with luck you'll end up here.

edge of the park are some nice pigeon plums, and several sabal palms along the walking path.

Biscayne Gardens Park has the potential to become much larger, as acres of open land exist in patches either adjacent to the park or within walking distance. It would be a gift to the neighborhood to see these patches connected into a green zone.

The area as a whole deserves some more attention. Helene says that, until lights were installed last year, the neighborhood was in the dark, thereby discouraging visitors. (How many residential areas in this part of the county still lack nighttime lighting?) Even if the area is lightly traveled, it has schools, churches, and many places that people call home. They deserve to have safe

spaces as well as green spaces.

If you're still wondering about recycling your Christmas tree, it's probably too late, but you can keep the idea in mind for next year. Technically, you must live within an unincorporated section of the county to qualify for the tree mulching service, but don't let that discourage you. Just like the paucity of people in the park, there were very few

Christmas trees piled up at the Golden Glades recycling center. I dropped off my tree and grabbed free mulch, with no questions asked.

Someday, while trying to take the back roads to reach the Golden Glades, you may get lost and find yourself here. Now you will know where you are.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Bird in the Hand

A leisurely outing turns into desperate attempt to rescue an injured cormorant

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

I first spotted the dark brown stump in the middle of the bayside road, dead center, blocking my way. The stump sat. I pushed down on the brake while peering over my steering wheel.

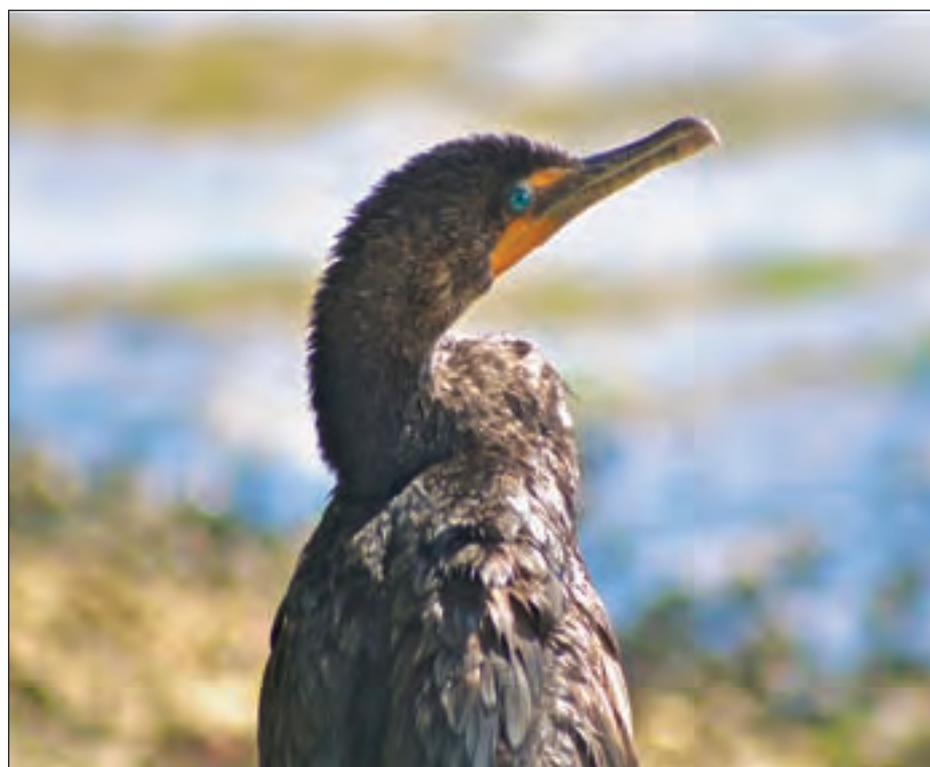
The stump moved. The stump had feet. And feathers. I put the car in park, turned off the ignition, and watched the stump awaken, walk across the road, hop onto the sandy area beneath it, and then hop up to a low-hanging tree branch. Positioned on its perch, webbed feet curled around the branch, the

stump fixed me with equal measures of suspicion and curiosity.

Turns out the stump was a cormorant, a medium- to large-size seabird you've probably seen if you live in Miami and ever go near the water.

Here's a short summary of the cormorant, which will aid in your understanding of why this scene on the overgrown old road, which runs parallel to the south side of the Julia Tuttle Causeway, immediately struck me as odd. (The fact that I was even at that location may strike you as odd already. I collect sea glass there.)

Cormorants are hypervigilant and skeptical of strangers. Unlike other



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

waterfowl (ducks, for example), cormorants don't let you near, even if you offer food. In fact, you likely will never get close enough to a cormorant to even attempt to feed one.

There are 40 or so species of cormorants or "shags," as they are called in Great Britain. The Miami-Dade variety is dark brown and can weigh up to five pounds. They are handsome birds, with

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stunningly beautiful turquoise eyes and long, thin, sharp beaks that hook downward. Though long thought to be in the raven family, they are actually related to pelicans. (“Cormorant” derives from the Latin “corvus marinus” or, roughly translated, sea raven.)

I knew something was off with this bird. What was he doing in the road? Cormorants are excellent divers able to snatch fish underwater. When they are not bobbing in and out of the water, they often perch on tree branches, wings fully extended, looking very grand, while allowing the sun to dry their plumage. Asphalt is not a natural habitat for the cormorant.

For a few fretful minutes, I worried that the Stump Bird had died in the street. The dog I had for 18 years had died two weeks prior, and my beagle died last year. Rational or not, I started to suspect I was becoming the Angel of Animal Death, and I did not desire a confirmation.

I perched myself on the ledge next to the road, in front of the bay. Sand crunched beneath my sneakers. I continued to sit there, glancing out at what had been, until then, the comforting blue ebb of Biscayne Bay. The cormorant made

no movement. This bird needed help and I had driven right into the situation.

For the next 15 minutes I observed his behavior. I couldn’t pinpoint it, but something was wrong. I grew up with parrots and still photograph them in the wild; I can usually spot a sickly bird. No wild bird should let me sit 20 feet away, definitely not while he is snoozing, and plus, as he set his brilliant blue eyes on me, I saw a cloudiness in them.

I called the Pelican Harbor Seabird Station, which is located on the 79th Street Causeway. Its mission is rehabilitating seabirds. I prayed my case was compelling enough. Nonprofit rescues are always short on staff, so you never know if help will arrive. Thankfully, it did, in the form of a woman wearing thick gloves and lugging two gigantic nets attached to poles.

After a failed attempt to scoop up the bird, we devised another plan. We lacked bait, so I ran to a truck parked up the road, figuring a fisherman could spare some chum. As I neared the vehicle, I noticed there was something fishy about the car, but it didn’t involve scales. Instead I saw an entwined, amorous couple. Fail.

At the opposite end of the old road, the cormorant had found a new perch. I walked past him and then, with huge net in hand, inched across the ground as quietly as possible, stopping every foot or so to see if he noticed me. I thought I could sneak up on him and net him. I got close, put down the net, and sat on the ledge. I then inched the net toward my grasp, concealed by trees.

Meanwhile, the woman from Pelican Harbor returned with some sardines, and tossed a few toward him. He was not interested. Not good.

I had never netted a bird before, yet, now closer, I was positioned favorably. I scooted toward the tree. Meanwhile, the woman crept up from the other side, crunching shells as she stepped, and went for him, but he flew out into the bay. My heart sank.

Except, the cormorant flew back. The woman lunged with the net and captured him momentarily, until he dove under the water and got away. I scanned the bay for him. When he resurfaced, I swiped my net in his direction, missing him by an inch.

“No!” I yelled, as he swam away. There was only one thing left to do. I

quickly trudged into the water, waist deep, stomping through seagrass. It felt like hands grabbing at my shoes. Then I swam out to him, unwieldy net in hand. I had only one chance. One toss. So. Close.

I lurched one arm forward, extending the net over him. I caught him! Then I quickly flipped the net so he couldn’t dive under again, and swam back to shore.

The woman and I transferred him from my net into an animal carrier. The cormorant had no visible injuries. I stood, clothing stuck to me like some co-ed at a wet T-shirt contest, and watched helplessly as the woman drove away with the bird.

I called the following day and learned he had died a short time after arriving at Pelican Harbor. The wildlife rehabber said he was about a year old. She ordered a necropsy. Her best guess was a head injury, possibly caused by a boat. The results were inconclusive. This news upset me greatly.

But in the end, I suppose his spirit lives on, and it is only his physical body that will be, to quoth the raven, nevermore.

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Cape Florida Lighthouse: Our Version of Ancient

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the BT

The Cape Florida Lighthouse represents the oldest extant structure built in Southeast Florida. While the old Spanish Monastery in North Miami Beach predates the lighthouse in age, it was built in northern Spain and only brought to Dade County in the early 1950s, where it was reassembled as a tourist attraction and later a house of worship.

The Cape Florida Lighthouse, seen here through the camera lens of Coconut Grove resident Ralph Munroe, in 1883, began

operating as a lighthouse on the southern tip of Key Biscayne in 1825. Then 60 feet in height (later it was elevated to 90 feet), the facility threw out a weak, flickering light every seven seconds, warning nearby ships of the perils of the Great Florida Reef that stood on the eastern edges of Biscayne Bay. The complex included a house for the keeper and his family.

The lighthouse possesses a history, which includes the severe damage it experienced in 1836 by marauding Indians during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), and the destruction to its Fresnel lens by Confederate forces in the early



Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, #Munroe 98D

stages of the Civil War, which darkened it for the remainder of the conflict.

After the Civil War, the Fowey Rock Lighthouse, a new, more powerful light, replaced it in 1878. From then till recent times, the old structure suffered from neglect and the forces of nature. Finally, on the eve of the City of Miami's Centennial celebration in 1996, an impressive restoration job reversed

the years of neglect. Today many visitors climb to top of the historical structure for a wonderful view of the waters beyond it.

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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Jungle Life

Many of the wondrous plants found at one of Miami's signature attractions could also thrive in your yard

By **Jeff Shimonski**
BT Contributor

I started working at Parrot Jungle as the assistant horticulturist in the mid-1970s. I didn't know then that I would forever be amazed by all the different species of plants I would find at this wonderful South Florida institution.

Some of the plants I first encountered had been planted decades before and were immense specimens, while others, like the bromeliad and cactus collections, would be changed or augmented on a regular seasonal cycle. Even though I worked five and a half days a week at the beginning, it was only after months of being there that I got to know the entire plant collection.

In our cactus garden, besides cactus, we had numerous species of succulent plants, from aloes to agaves to the stinky flowered stapelias. I enjoyed the hairy, deep red, hand-size flowers of our most prolific stapelia species, *Stapelia grandiflora*, a very variable species. The plants grew as a short groundcover in the hottest full-sun locations in the cactus garden and would bloom sporadically throughout the hot months of the year. They didn't tolerate frost or too much rain very well, but otherwise this particular stapelia species was easy to grow.

There are numerous stapelia species with flowers of different colors and sizes, many of which stink when open because they attract flies as pollinators. Carrion flower is a common name for

these succulents. Stapelia make excellent potted plants when given full sun and excellent soil drainage.

One plant at Parrot Jungle that always fascinated me was this large mass of stringy-looking vine with thick, succulent leaves that had grown throughout the canopy of a mature live oak. I had never seen anything like it before; the mass of vine must have grown at least 25 feet into the tree's canopy. It was also growing in the canopy of another tree, a palm, the native *Sabal palmetto*. After I found it in bloom one day, I finally learned its name: hoyo, or wax vine.

Hoya is a plant that is very closely related to stapelia. There are 200 to 300 species of this really interesting genus found throughout Southeast Asia, the Malay Archipelago, and Australia. The photo that accompanies this article is of a *Hoya carnososa* in bloom that I photographed in the canopy of a friend's live oak here in Miami. This particular clump came from a single cutting planted in a hanging pot that had been attached to this tree about 30 years ago.

These attractive vining plants, or creepers, are often found growing as epiphytes, in the canopy of trees. Most hoyas like bright light but not full sun. The typically dark green foliage will often look a bit yellowish when in too much light.

I planted a *Hoya kerrii* a few years ago on a black olive tree at Jungle Island. This species has thick heart-shaped leaves and a large white bloom. Actually, the blooming structure is more correctly



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

The waxy, jewel-like flowers of a hoyo vine.

termed the inflorescence. An inflorescence is the structure that holds all of the individual flowers together.

Each of the white flowers on this species has a red, star-shaped center, which sometimes glistens with a dark yellowish nectar. When the light shines just right, these waxy-looking flowers sparkle like jewels. This particular plant has grown up into the canopy of the black olive but not onto the foliage, because of the bright light. I was once told by an old-timer that hoyas need to be allowed to grow up into trees; once they start hanging down, they will bloom regularly.

Hoyas have an interesting flowering structure. The plant will drop very thin stalks called spurs. (If you want to get scientific, they are peduncles.) At the tips of these spurs, the inflorescence will form. For many species the spurs are perennial, so they will continue to grow and produce more flowers over time. Do not cut these long stalks off to make the plant look "neat" because it will likely never give you flowers.

Many species of hoyo have a sweet scent, sometimes resembling chocolate.

Most hoyas also produce a good bit of nectar. This is, of course, to attract pollinators, which may include moths, flies, and ants. I have rarely seen natural pollination occur, but when it does happen, the fruit with the seeds inside will be borne as twin pods.

When ripe, the pods will split open and the seeds will be dispersed in the wind or collected by a sharp-eyed horticulturist looking to plant more hoyas. The seeds germinate quite readily but will not last very long, so plant them right away.

Hoyas can be a great addition to a landscape. Many species can easily be grown as epiphytes, while the smaller species make excellent hanging container specimens.

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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Food for Thought

Some things you can do locally to lessen the world agriculture crisis

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Worried about the planet? Or are you more worried about what to have for dinner tonight?

Worrying about what you eat today makes more sense than worrying about a flood that might happen in 20 years, but both relate to your survival.

When that 20-year flood washes away the food you were planning to eat for dinner, then you will really, *really* worry about the planet that feeds you.

How secure and safe is our food supply? Let's start with fresh water. Locally we are doing quite well and, recently, your household should have received a brochure, mandated by the Clean Water Act, that details where your drinking water comes from and how it is tested.

The take-home message is this: Drink tap water. It is safe. Do not believe propaganda from the bottled-water industry. Stop buying packaged water. Use your faucet.

The wider, long-term picture is not so rosy. The nation's breadbasket in the Midwest continues to suffer one of the worst droughts ever recorded. You will see the effect on food prices this year, so you may want to stock up on canned corn.

Internationally, desertification is spreading and, tragically, it corresponds to some of the poorest places on earth. An inverse relationship exists between the

wealthy world, which has produced most of the accumulated pollution that fuels climate change, and the poor nations that suffer its worst impacts. We simply don't feel the threat of climate change like they do in Africa and Asia. However, Australia is feeling the heat right now; it is basically on fire, and its climate-change-deniers are converting into believers day by day.

Extreme weather and growing populations put both water and food supplies at risk everywhere, so no one should be feeling too secure in their long-term outlook. Heard of "peak oil"? Most likely we have reached peak water, peak grain, and peak fish. On the other hand, modern agriculture can produce much more food than our planet's seven billion people need; the problem is uneven production and distribution. Again, wealthy nations tend to have stockpiles while poor ones face shortages.

Owing to overpopulation, hunger worldwide is possibly worse than at any time in history, with one billion people malnourished in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent alone, according to the Earth Policy Institute. (To put that number into perspective, that's equivalent to the entire world population circa 1800.) We have the capacity to solve this problem this year. We only need astute leaders who care.

Every day, the earth's net population increases by more than 200,000, with the majority born into poverty. For us, the



take-home message is to be thankful and grateful for our abundance — for now — and to resolve to expand food justice both globally and locally.

In Florida we can feel pretty good about our agriculture and access to healthy foods in the short term. Especially at this time of year we should be feasting on local produce.

Shop at a farmers market. Demand local produce at the supermarket. The Biscayne Corridor will get a boost of healthy (but expensive) food when the new Whole Foods market comes to North Miami this spring, but even there you'll have to search carefully for locally harvested produce.

Check out some of the grassroots movements that are producing local food on a small scale: the Greater Everglades Foodshed, the Urban Oasis Project, and Slow Food Miami. Support our local heroes of permaculture, a practical method of sustainable gardening and living. Marcus Thomson offers classes with Permaculture Miami, and my fabulous yoga instructor, Catherine Johnson, grows an incredibly productive garden at her home in North Miami Beach, proving you can feed yourself with an average-size yard. (Also read this issue's cover story about Chef Keith Kalmanowicz and his Love and Vegetables project.)

Many serious issues confront our food supply: the expansion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the shrinking diversity of seeds, the continued overuse of pesticides and fertilizers instead of organic methods, inhumane industrial animal farming, and subsidies that create an oversupply of cheap, fatty, and processed foods that are a root cause (along with inactivity) of the nation's obesity and healthcare crisis. How ironic is it that Americans are eating themselves to death while whole continents are malnourished? How shameful.

Just like the climate, our global food system is out of balance. As an individual, you have little control over this situation, but you have great control over what you eat.

Here are some tips to restore your balance: Become "vegetable strong" by choosing more meatless meals. Search for local and organic produce. Remember that you are what you eat, and also *where* you eat; become a locavore by shopping at markets and restaurants that offer local produce.

Above all, be grateful for now. Today it's others far away who are suffering food insecurity. Tomorrow, it could be us.

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

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Magical Mystery Tour

A day at Disney summons up almost every feeling imaginable

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

How do you sum up a trip to the Magic Kingdom with your two kids and in-laws? Magically comedic. Somehow, this trip allowed me to see things I had never noticed or thought I would observe at a place known for its ship-shape, happy-memory-making reputation.

Let me begin by saying we all had a fantastic time. I am sure the other 149,994 people who were there with us did as well. (Disney doesn't publish its crowd sizes, but the playland's 107 acres were stretched to capacity on this particular Saturday.)

The adventure began with smooth sailing into the park via our magical chariot, the Honda Odyssey. After parking effortlessly, we waited in line for the tram to the entrance gates. Probably the most stressful part of the day, this line was not really a line, but instead a mass of anxious parents and amped-up kids elbowing each other for access to the front of the throng.

Holding the crowd back from death-by-speeding-tram was an 80-year-old park employee wearing a ranger outfit and screaming for people to "Stay behind the safety poles!" I contemplated our elderly "retirement jobs."

Matilda, my eight-year old, looked up at me with fear, her hair whipping

around her face, as the second tram whizzed by us at breakneck speed. Her fear was not that she was nearly flattened, but that the tram had passed us by without stopping.

The wait to get entrance tickets was 80 minutes. I used the time wisely to download nifty Disney apps and compare agendas and memories with our fellow standers-in-line. Thirty minutes into the wait, Matilda looked at the crowd and yelled, "Are we having fun yet?" She got big laughs for that one.

Lesson learned: Print tickets at home and arrive an hour before the gates open. Once we got our tickets, we realized we were still a ferry ride away from the Happiest Place on Earth, and that yet another lengthy line stood between us and the ferryboat.

In true Brewé fashion, we had a strategy for the day: Get to It's a Small World. The iconic attraction seemed a great way to start off the Brewé-venture, with an innocent, sleepy ride that conjures feelings of peace and harmony, right? My four-year-old was terrified by it. As we made our way to the front of the line and she realized she was going to have to get into an unmanned boat that appeared eerily out of a darkened corridor, she clung desperately to us.

It occurred to me as we slowly floated along that, while my childhood memories of this ride were ones of pure



awe, my kids are used to more advanced technology: more life-like dolls and robots, without 25 years of dust and grime. We also realized that their very diverse upbringing made the racially stereotyped dolls seem even creepier. At the end, though, they were singing along. Thank God, since the ride backed up and we were stuck in the final section for nearly 20 minutes.

The rest of the day was a sparkly, fun-soaked haze and the long lines, while not ideal, allowed for some epic people-watching and priceless observations. Below are some of my favorites:

A woman snapping a picture screamed at her children: "Act like you're having fun, dammit!"

The number of kids in line who watched movies on various iDevices was astonishing. (Really? Really?)

The sheer volume of newborn babies. Many of these new parents didn't have other, older kids. They were just happy couples at the Happiest Place on Earth with their oblivious little bundles of happiness.

Someone with a giant turkey leg decided he didn't need the extra fat from the turkey skin, so he threw the skin on the ground. An aggressive egret

swooped down, grabbed the turkey skin in its beak, and gracefully swooped off — only to drop it on a young teenage passerby as she applied lip gloss. The horror! I laughed for an hour.

A woman on a princess ride took a picture down the inside of her shirt. Upon witnessing this from afar (and after making sure my kids didn't see), I kept thinking, "Did she tweet that?" "Did she text that?" Oh, to be a fly on that cyberspace wall.

A man, tired from a day of pricey corn dogs and rides ending in gift shops, exploded on his family on Main Street U.S.A. We did not stay to watch the drama unfold, but Disney World may be paying for their future marriage counseling.

The number of times I heard mothers say, "Don't put your mouth on that!" was impressive. Someone should call the Guinness Book. I am sure there was a world record there.

Lastly, the incessant princess chimes that started at the front gates and didn't end until we got back into the Odyssey made me want to curl up into a fetal position and chant for a margarita.

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Central Coast Charmers

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

California's Central Coast appellation is the kitchen sink of wine regions.

Technically called the "Central Coast American Viticultural Area," it runs some 250 miles from San Francisco south to Santa Barbara and consists of roughly four million acres, of which almost 100,000 are planted with wine grapes. Home to 350-plus wineries and 29 separate, smaller appellations, it produces about 15 percent of the state's grapes, which are turned into everything from thimblefuls of extra-virgin (and extra-expensive) juice to titillate the palates of the One Percent to jugs of cheap, indifferent plonk to numb the palates of the rest of us.

Here at VINO, of course, we are neither virginal nor plonkish, merely discriminating in our tastes and careful with our dollars. (Okay, we admit it: We're overwhelmed by all the wines out there and have been known to scrounge pennies from beneath our sofa cushions.)

It's easy to be overwhelmed. More than three dozen different varieties are grown within the Central Coast AVA, though Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay constitute the vast majority of plantings. Rhone varieties like Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre, Marsanne, and Roussanne are growing in popularity, owing to consumers' interest in wines

outside the Cabernet-Chardonnay-Merlot Iron Triangle, as well as the Central Coast's Rhone-friendly warm days-cool nights climate.

Unfortunately, virtually all of those wines cost more than 12 bucks a bottle, as most small producers just can't compete, price-wise, with the giant-super-mega-wineries that dominate the \$12-and-under price point. So despite the bazillions of gallons of Central Coast wines produced each year, finding good — and inexpensive — ones is something of a crapshoot.

But we rolled those dice anyway, dear readers, risking our taste buds, stomach lining, and limited budget to uncover a handful of vinous gems. For example, the **2011 Red Pony Ranch Pinot Noir**. Run out and buy a case of this wine right now, as I can't remember another that delivered so much Pinot Noir charm and character for a blessed \$11.99.

And here's the kicker: It dishes up a hefty 14.4-percent alcohol, yet is so well made and well balanced it sits lightly on the palate, with only the tiniest bit of alcoholic hotness at the first sip. After that, it's pure pleasure, a medium-bodied wine with bright cherry-berry flavors, a dollop of toasty oak, and that beguiling Pinot earthiness. I'd throw in a few more adjectives, but my thesaurus has already gone limp.

Like good, cheap Pinot Noir, good and inexpensive Cabernet Sauvignon can be one of those oxy-type morons. Not the **2010 Running With Scissors Cab**, though. It shares a certain earthy quality

with the Red Pony, but doubles down on the fruit, with pungent black cherry-plum flavors enhanced by quick hits of black olive, cloves, and oak. Good structure and low alcohol (13 percent) give it an elegance that belies its \$10 price tag.

Remember how I said even cork dorks like VINO can be overwhelmed by the sheer number of wines on your average supermarket or wine-shop shelf? Well, here's a good wine-buying tip: The cuter the name, the worse the wine. So a wine named after ice cream might just trip your *ick* meter. Not that the **NV Scoops Red Wine Blend** is really icky, just assertively grapey in a candied, cough syrupy, red cherry way. It's apparently going after the suddenly trendy "sweet red wine" market segment — a segment that, like "psychopathic assault-weapon owners," I'd just as soon avoid.

Avoid too the erroneously named **Smart Cookie 2010 Chardonnay**, a truly odd-tasting liquid that is to Chardonnay what Lindsay Lohan is to sobriety. You'd have to be a real dumb muffin to shell out ten bucks for this dog biscuit.

Thankfully, not all Central Coast Chardonnays channel washed up Hollywood celebutards. The **2010 Sterling Vineyards** and **2011 Cupcake** (an exception to the "cute name equals crap" rule) offer that big, rich, buttery character most Chardonnay drinkers love, yet do so with enough restraint to keep from becoming



The excellent Red Pony Pinot Noir is available at the North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) for \$11.99, as are the Coastline Pinot Grigio, Running With Scissors Cabernet, and not-so-excellent Smart Cookie Chardonnay, all for \$9.99. The Sterling Chardonnay and Scoops Red Wine Blend can be found for \$7.99 each at the North Miami ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525), while the Cupcake Chardonnay is at Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171 and 1776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-3433) for \$9.79.

cloying. Both are plush and creamy-textured with lots of toasty oak, just held in check by citrus-green apple acidity.

For something lighter and crisper, yet still fruit-driven, there's the **2011 Coastline Pinot Grigio**. Its aromas of lemon, lime, green apple, and white peach carry through to the palate, where the acidity slowly reveals itself in the long, lingering finish. In rolling the dice on the Central Coast AVA, this one comes up aces.

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Good Luck, Long Life, New Year

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Happy New Year! No, we're not a month behind. Chinese New Year is this month, starting on February 9 (New Year's Eve) and running through February 15 — or longer. Some celebrate for an additional week with spectacular "lion dances" (to evict bad spirits), red angpou envelopes containing cash and, especially, all manner of ritual foods to ensure good luck in the coming Year of the Snake.

That means readers who neglected to eat the western world's traditional New Year's Eve/New Year's Day lucky foods on January 1 get another chance with lucky Asian foods, many symbolizing wealth and abundance (dumplings resembling Chinese ingots, green lettuce wraps representing currency), plus longevity noodles, key to a long life. Just don't cut them before eating.

For those who'd rather not make their own dishes, much less their own lion masks, Brickell Key's Mandarin Oriental Hotel will be offering the traditional dancers plus multicourse dinners featuring longevity noodles and many foods granting abundance at both Azul (\$135) and Café Sambal (\$85). Reservations: 305-913-8358.

And now on to recent restaurant openings, which have also been abundant.

OPENINGS

B Sweet (20 NE 41st St.; 305-918-4453). Tucked into a former apartment building

near N. Miami Avenue, this cozy indoor/outdoor coffee shop, from the husband/wife team of Karina Gimenez and Tom Worhach, isn't easy to find; it's not yet on Dacra's official Design District map. But it's the source of pastries that are arguably the most elegant in Miami: tiny berry-studded crème brûlée tarts; almond-rich peach frangipane squares; a white-and-dark chocolate mousse cake worthy of Paris's patisseries. Surprising for a neighborhood bakery; not surprising considering Worhach's previous exec pastry chef posts, including the famed Mansion at Turtle Creek and Palm Beach's Four Seasons.

Fish Fish (13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124). Another venture from a married team, Rebecca Nachlas and Melvyn Franks, this sophisticated yet warm seafood restaurant/lounge also features a welcome surprise: a market, where home cooks can buy any of the delivered-daily fresh fish or shellfish offered on the changing menu, including stone crab claws from their own Florida Keys processing plant. And Oscar Quezada, longtime chef at Islamorada's Lazy Days, has the kitchen impeccably together. Sample happy hour's scrumptious new \$6 bar bites and you'll stay for larger treats like greaselessly fried whole red snapper with Thai and lemon aioli dipping sauces.

Primo Trattoria Italiana (2216 NE 123rd St., 305-891-3312). Another new family-owned eatery. Is Valentine's Day this month? Anyway, Saverio "Primo"



Macaluso and his wife had a long journey from their native Sicily, with stops to run trattorias in Rome and Tampa, to bring North Miami Italian favorites like mushroom ravioli with butter/sage sauce, stinco d'agnello (lamb shank and veggies braised in red wine), and for take-out customers only, pizzas.

The Embassy (4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-8446). This gastropub has no sign except an upside-down one, reading "exit," over the front entrance. But I guess you need no sign when the chef is Alan Hughes, whose pioneering Buena Vista restaurant One Ninety was attracting hordes back in 2002, before the Design District had any there. The Embassy features live music and stays open late (midnight Tuesday-Thursday, 3:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday). Featured food: pintxos, artisanal tapas typical of San Sebastian, gourmet capital of Spain's Basque country.

Alba (17315 Collins Ave., 786-932-9305). From bad-boy celeb chef Ralph Pagano (a contestant on *Hell's Kitchen* and *Iron Chef*), this beachside Italian spot (in the Sole on the Ocean resort) serves seafood, pizzas, housemade pastas, and old-school Italian-American entrées. Entertainment highlight: The

"Vinny D Split," a game enabling tables to win their meals for free.

Bonding (638 S. Miami Ave., 786-409-4794). In the space formerly occupied by French bistro LouLou (whose recent closing I missed), this Thai/sushi spot is from Bond Trisransi, originally behind Mr. Yum, 2B Asian Bistro, and extinct Soi Asian Bistro (whose closing I also missed. Ouch!). Ambiance, including loud music, is aimed at the young; dishes like crispy duck salad with tamarind dressing appeal to all, as do affordable prices.

Georges Kitchen & The Loft (3404 N. Miami Ave., 305-438-9199). You've probably already heard of this stylish, sultry restolounge for the wrong reason: an alleged owner/customer brawl that hit local front pages. Focus instead on French-inspired small and big plates: an especially savory short rib tartare with capers, deviled egg, and caviar; addictive Idiazabal cheese churros with zesty romesco sauce. Upstairs is The Loft, a sleek lounge.

Hungry for more food news? See "BizBuzz" (page 24). Send me tips and alerts: restaurants@biscaynetimes.com.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 314.

Restaurant listings for the BT Dining Guide 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

Aijo
1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 786-452-1637

Hidden within Jade condo, this sleek Japanese fusion restaurant (whose name means "love") is also a jewel. Food-loving Venezuelan owner Rene Buroz encourages innovation, and his chefs (including four from Zuma) respond with beautifully plated items as fun as they are flavorful. Don't miss the layered croquette (a sort of Asian croqueta: mouthwatering crispy rice, subtly smoked salmon, and creamy crab), Ajo kani (king crab legs with citrus foam clouds and rich emulsified butter dip), or creative cocktails from a mixologist who also juggles and plays with fire.

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 gluttonous chef Joel Huff crafts imaginative, often multi-part dishes – some Asian-inspired (like oysters with fresh wasabi, hibiscus granita, and Asian pear), as one would expect from the Mandarin Oriental's top eatery. But most of Huff's dishes are strongly European-influenced, primarily by New Spanish cuisine. Elegant, playfully molecular gastronomy-accented almond gazpacho with foie gras "snow," or "eggs, bacon & toast" (suckling pig, tempura duck egg, truffled potato, and speck "air") tell the story. \$\$\$\$

Balans
901 S. Miami Ave., (Mary Brickell Village), 305-534-9191
Open until 4:00 a.m. on weekends, this London import (Miami's second Balans) offers a sleeker setting than its perennially popular Lincoln Road progenitor, but the same simple yet sophisticated global menu. The indoor space can get mighty loud, but lounging on the dog-friendly outdoor terrace, over a rich croque monsieur (which comes with an alluringly sweet/sour citrus-dressed side salad), a lobster club on onion toast, some surprisingly solid Asian fusion items, and a cocktail is one of Miami's more relaxing experiences. \$\$-\$\$\$

Bali Café
109 NE 2nd Ave., 305-358-5751

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

Banana & Leaf
234 NE 3rd St., 786-431-5548

Ever get tempted by the convenience of supermarket sushi boxes, but feel uneasy about freshness and disgruntled about

sparseness of fillings? In the grab-and-go containers here, raw fish glistens and makis like a plump snow crab roll have a satisfying seafood-to-rice ratio. If you'd rather, dishes on the larger custom menu arrive almost as fast. There is also limited, tasty Southeast Asian fare. Most unbelievable: Prices beat supermarket sushi by far. \$

The Bar at Level 25 (Conrad Hotel)
1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6500

On the Conrad's 25th floor, The Bar's picture-windowed space is not just a watering hole with panoramic views. At lunch it's an elegant sandwich bar; at night it's a raw bar (with pristine coldwater oysters) and (best) a tapas bar serving pintos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

Bento Sushi & Chinese
801 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-603-8904

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

Bon Fromage
500 Brickell Ave. #106, 786-329-5632

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

Brother Jimmy's BBQ
900 S. Miami Ave. #135, 786-360-3650

The South is supposed to be the source of barbecue. But Bro J evidently didn't hear about that. His signature North Carolina pork 'cue comes from NYC, where the first Brother Jimmy's opened more than 20 years ago. Miami's location is actually the first south of the Mason-Dixon line. But the slow-smoked pulled pork but tastes righteous – no interfering glop, just hot sauce-spiked vinegar to balance the fat fattiness. There's other 'cue, too, including big (not baby back) ribs, and respectable brisket. \$\$-\$\$\$

Bryan in the Kitchen
104 NE 2nd Ave., 305-371-7777

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

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

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

Café Sambal
500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8358

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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Machiya
3252 NE 1st Ave. #116, 786-507-5025

Originally called Machiya Ramen Noodle House, this eatery changed its name – and really, the place is not so much a ramen joint as a contemporary izakaya (lounge featuring Japanese hot and cold small plates plus sushi), with a few added ramen bowls. Most of the menu is a mix of today's popular favorites, like "Kobe" sliders, and unique inventions. Wildest: wasabi-spiced tuna pizza. Our faves: fatty salmon makis (lightly seared salmon belly with shrimp tempura, asparagus, and yuzu sauce); rich miso-braised short ribs; steam buns with rock shrimp and spicy aioli.

Rincon Escondido
2697 Biscayne Blvd., 305-438-9300

On a quick drive-by, this eatery surrounded by still-ungentrified storefronts rather resembles a hole-in-the-wall Latin cafeteria. Inside, though, the look is rustic-chic, and the menu features some of Miami's most refined traditional or creative Spanish tapas. We love the open-faced sandwiches, particularly montaditos de boquerones (with fresh anchovies and brunoised veggies). Traditionalists will find patatas bravas satisfyingly spicy; braver experimenters should try bombas de queso (fried cheese balls with sweet orange blossom sauce), actually alarming in name only. \$\$-\$\$\$

Thea Pizzeria-Café
1951 NW 7th Ave., 305-777-3777

Just over the border from artsy Wynwood, this ultra-cool café (whose interior features a 30-foot Italian glass floral mosaic) isn't what you'd expect to find inside one of the medical/lab buildings in Miami's sterile "Health District." But the owner is Thea Goldman, former founding partner of Wynwood's pioneering restolounge Joey's, which explains both the stylishness and the menu, highlighted by imaginative wood-oven designer pizzas, plus artisan charcuterie/cheese platters, creative salads, and housemade salted caramel gelato. Not your typical hospital food. Call ahead regarding dinner. At this writing, it's being served Fridays only. \$\$-\$\$\$

Cavas Wine Tasting Room
900 S. Miami Ave. #180, 305-372-8027

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

Chophouse Miami
300 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-938-9000

Formerly Manny's Steakhouse, Miami's Chophouse retains basically everything but the famed name (from the original Manny's in Minneapolis), and remains Miami's most intentionally masculine steakhouse. Here, ensconced in your black leather booth, everything is humongous: dry-aged choice-grade steaks like the Bludgeon of Beef (a boldly flavorful 40-ounce bone-in ribeye, described as "part meat, part weapon"); king crab legs that dwarf the plate; cocktail shrimp that could swallow the Loch Ness monster whole; two-fisted cocktails that would fell a T-Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$\$

The Corner
1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-961-7887

With a Zuma alum in the kitchen, a Gig alum crafting classic or creative cocktails, a warm pub feel, and hours extending from lunch to nearly breakfast the next morning, The Corner is transforming a desolate downtown corner into a neighborhood hang-out. The nicely priced menu of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and sweets (the latter from Om Nom Nom's cookie queen Anthea Ponsetti) ranges from 100-percent homemade ice cream sandwiches to the Crazy Madame, France's elaborate Croque

UPPER EASTSIDE

Iron Side Café
7600 NE 4th Ct., 305-759-0551

Located in the Little River "business" (meaning warehouse) district, inside an art complex that looks like just another factory, this eatery is easy to miss. But it shouldn't be missed. Both the cozy interior and more expansive terrace provide picturesque settings for artfully plated, seriously organic and locally sourced fare from Nuno Grullon, original exec chef at Metro Organic Bistro. Particularly recommended: tuna tartare with a unique spicy lemon dressing; ossa buco featuring flavorful grass-fed beef from Gaucho Ranch right down the road. Saturday BBQ/gallery nights are especially hip. \$\$-\$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Caminito Way
1960 NE 123rd St., 305-893-8322

Open since 1999, this bakery-café is particularly known for its European-influenced homemade Argentine pastries. So come early to pick from the widest variety of savory empanadas (plumply stuffed and admirably delicate – no leaden crusts here) or sweet facturas (Argentina's most popular breakfast items). They sell out fast. What some might not know is that despite its small size, Caminito's also crafts tasty big food: elaborate salads; hefty baguette sandwiches, like choripan sausage with chimichurri; pastas; major meat or poultry entrées. For lighter lunches, try tartas (quiches), also perfect party food. \$\$-\$\$\$

Fish Fish
13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124

Here's what makes this elegantly warm restolounge and seafood market not just an irresistible neighborhood draw but a worth-the-drive dining destination: Both local and cold-water fish and shellfish, including stone crab and lobster from owners Melvyn Franks and Rebecca Nachlas's own Florida Keys plant, that are always fresh, never frozen (except some shrimp). For home cooks, the market offers all delivered-daily catches on the menu. But don't miss chef Oscar Quezada's simple and perfect preparations, including lightly battered, crispy tempura shrimp; sophisticated fish and chips (featuring Atlantic cod, not cheapo fish); bracing ceviches; and, for carnivores, shepherd's pie topped with ethereal whipped potatoes. \$\$-\$\$\$

Madame (a béchamel sauce-topped grilled cheese/ham/fried egg sandwich) plus bacon and caramelized onion. \$\$-\$\$

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

The owners, and budget-friendly formula, are the same here as at older Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita: Buy an entrée (all under \$20) from a sizable list of Mediterranean, Latin, American, or Asian-influenced choices (like Thai-marinated churrasco with crispy shoestring fries) and get an appetizer for free, including substantial stuff like a Chihuahua cheese casserole with chorizo and pesto. The difference: This place, housed in the former location of short-lived La Broche, has an even more upscale ambiance than Dolores – including a million-dollar water view. \$\$\$

Cvi.che 105
105 NE 3rd Ave., 305-577-3454

Fusion food – a modern invention? Not in Peru, where native and Euro-Asian influences have mixed for more than a century. But chef Juan Chipoco gives the ceviches and tiraditos served at this hot spot his own unique spin. Specialties include flash-marinated raw seafood creations, such as *tiradito a la crema de rocoto* (sliced fish in citrus-spiked chili/cream sauce). But traditional fusion dishes like Chinese-Peruvian Chaufa fried rice (packed with jumbo shrimp, mussels, and calamari) are also fun, as well as surprisingly affordable. \$\$

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

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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. \$\$

D-Dog House

50 SW 10th St., 305-381-7770
While it has become increasingly common to find servers at upscale restaurants utilizing computerized POS (point of service) systems to take orders, this high-tech hole-in-the-wall trumps them by replacing servers – and in-house entertainment, too – with iPads that accept not just food orders and credit cards but music requests. You can web surf or game, too, while waiting for your choice of the house specialty: supersized hot dogs, most overloaded with internationally inspired toppings. To accompany, hand-cut fries are a must. And have a cocktail. There's a full liquor bar. \$\$\$

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-403-1033
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 croquettes, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glam rooftop patio. \$\$\$

Dominique Bistro-Club

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-371-8859
At typical restoulounges, the “resto” part often gets the short end of the stick. But not at this chic but friendly spot, where Gerardo Barrera, an alum of Paris's Le Cordon Bleu, plus his wife Dominique and her brother José Sigona, welcome diners with France's best-known bistro classics: coquilles St. Jacques (tender scallops in mushroom/white wine sauce); a precision-cooked entrecôte rib-eye with Bearnaise or complex Café de Paris butter; crème brûlée (from scratch) or macaron cookies (from heaven). No velvet ropes, and club music isn't cranked till 11:00 p.m. \$\$\$

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 crispy beer-battered moist cod, served with hand-cut fries and “mushy [mashed] peas,” plus housemade tartar sauce and ketchup. All desserts are also made in-house, including a deliciously rich (but worth it) sticky date pudding with toffee sauce. Tie down your dental implants. They're in for a wild ride. \$\$

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

Eternity Coffee Roasters

117 SE 2nd Ave., 305-609-4981
Normally we list only full restaurants, but even a (not so) simple

cuppa joe from Chris Johnson and Cristina Garces's sleek micro-roastery will convince anyone possessing taste buds that fine coffee can be as complex as fine wine, and as satisfying as solid food. A changing selection of superior single-origin beans (many varieties from the Garces family's Colombian farm; most others from Ethiopia and Kenya), roasted in-house, produces “slow-pour” regular brews with amazing nuances of fruits, chocolate, and more. The espresso is so smooth sugar isn't necessary. Other treats: flaky chocolate-stuffed “cigars” and other locally baked pastries. Free parking. \$

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 table 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., 305-808-6666
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. \$\$

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 alla scoglio; or delicate Vitello alla Milanese on arugula. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Garcia's Seafood Grille and Fish Market

398 NW N. River Dr., 305-375-0765
Run by a fishing family for a couple of generations, this venerable Florida fish shack is the real thing. No worries about the seafood's freshness; on their way to the dining deck overlooking the Miami River, diners can view the retail fish market. Best preparations are the simplest. When stone crabs are in season, Garcia's claws are as good as Joe's but considerably cheaper. The local fish sandwich is most popular – grouper, yellowtail snapper, or mahi mahi. \$\$\$

Giovana Caffè

154 SE 1st Ave. 305-374-1024
If the menu at this charming downtown hideaway contained only one item – pear and gorgonzola ravioli dressed, not drowned, in sage-spiced cream sauce – we'd be happy. But the café, formerly lunch-only but now serving weekday dinners, is also justly famed for meal-size salads like grilled skirt steak atop sweetly balsamic-dressed spinach (with spinach, tomatoes, bacon, hard-boiled eggs, blue cheese, and almonds), or an especially lavish chicken salad with pine nuts, golden raisins, apples, and basil, an Italian twist. \$\$

Grimpa Steakhouse

901 Brickell Plaza, 305-455-4757
This expansive indoor/outdoor Brazilian eatery is sleekly contemporary, but no worries. The classic sword-wielding gauchos are here, serving a mind-reeling assortment of skewered beef, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages, and fish. And included in the price (dinner \$47, lunch \$34) is the traditional belly-busting buffet of hot and cold prepared foods, salad, cold cuts, and cheeses. A pleasant, nontraditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Half Moon Empanadas

192 SE 1st Ave., 305-379-2525
As with South Beach's original Half Moon, you can get wraps or salads. But it's this snackery's unique take on Argentine-style empanadas that makes it seem a natural for national franchising. The soft-crust-ed, 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. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

The Hoxton

1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-691-2730
Though inland (and reportedly inspired by old England), this urban beach bar/grill has the relaxing, refined-rustic ambiance of a classic New England hangout, and upscaled “down shore” food to match: Maine lobster rolls, on brioche rather than hot dog rolls; a luxe take on Québécoise poutine (from-scratch fries with Vermont cheddar and duck confit gravy); an especially lavish clam bake. Also appealingly different from the Miami norm: frequent live bands of many musical genres in the comfortable lounge area, plus almost spookily competent service. \$\$\$

Il Gabbiano

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

Jackson Soul Food

950 NW 3rd Ave., 305-377-6710
With a recently refurbished exterior to match its classy/comfy retro interior, this 65-year-old Overtown soul food breakfast institution now has only one drawback: It closes at 1:00 p.m. Never mind, night owls. If you're a first-timer here, order the astonishingly fluffy pancakes with juicy beef sausage, and you'll set multiple alarm clocks to return. Classic drop biscuits (preferably with gravy) are also must-haves. And hearty Southern breakfast staples like smothered chicken wings or fried fish do make breakfast seem like lunch, too. \$

Jamón, Jamón, Jamón,

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

Kork Wine & Cheese Bar

2 S. Miami Ave., 305-377-8899
From the owner of Transit Lounge, a hip hangout long before the downtown/Brickell revival, this more upscale-cool venue is worth checking out for its almost medieval dimly lit décor alone, including a subterranean wine cellar/party room, formerly a WW II-era bomb shelter. Comestibles are limited to

wine and cheese plus accompaniments. Both are available to go. Kork is as much market as lounge. But with a stock of roughly 5000 bottles, and a selection of roughly two dozen perfectly ripe artisanal cheeses – curated by a cheese sommelier who'll create perfect pairings – who needs more? \$\$

Largo Bar & Grill

401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706
Sure, Bayside Marketplace is touristy. But it can be fun to spend a day playing visitor in your own city. If you do, this waterfront place overlooking Miamarina is a superior food choice. Except 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 mango Nicoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with salad 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 – cracking crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it's likely not from a restaurant's own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery's café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Nicoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$

La Sandwicherie

34 SW 8th St., 305-374-9852
This second location of the open-air diner that is South Beach's favorite après-club eatery (since 1988) closes earlier (midnight Sunday-Thursday, 5:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday), but the smoothies, salads, and superb Parisian sandwiches are the same: ultra-crusty baguette stuffed with evocative charcuterie and cheeses (saucisson sec, country pâté, camembert, etc.) and choice of salad veggies plus salty/tart cornichons and Sandwicherie's incomparable Dijon mustard vinaigrette. Additionally the larger branch has an interior, with a kitchen enabling hot foods (quiches and croques), plus A/C. \$\$\$

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr., 305-372-2333
At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete Parisian 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. \$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Martini 28 146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414

This stylish little lunch-only spot, a labor of love from a husband-wife chef team, serves what might well be the most impressive meal deal in town. From an ambitious, daily-changing menu of fare that's geographically eclectic but prepared with solid classic technique, diners get a choice of about ten entrées (substantial stuff like steak au poivre with Madeira cream sauce and roasted potatoes, or pignolia-crusted salmon with Dijon mustard sauce, potatoes, and veggies), plus soup or salad and housemade dessert. For just \$9.99. Told ya. \$

Miami Art Café 364 SE 1st St., 305-374-5117

For businessfolk on the go, this breakfast/lunch-only French café serves up evocative baguette sandwiches (like camembert) loaded, if you like, with greens, olives, and more. For those with time to sit, we'd recommend the savory crêpes, garnished with perfectly dressed salad, or sweet crêpe like the Bonne Maman (whose sugar/salted butter stuffing brings Brittany to downtown). And quiches are nicely custardy. But there are surprises here, too, including just a few full entrées, with correctly made traditional sauces one wouldn't expect at luncheonette – except, perhaps, in Paris. \$-\$\$

Miami's Finest Caribbean Restaurant 236 NE 1st Ave., 305-381-9254

Originally from Jamaica, proprietor Miss Pat has been serving her traditional homemade island specialties to downtown office workers and college students since the early 1990s. Most popular item here might be the weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

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

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

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

Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there's an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a

single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$-\$\$\$

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

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 jalapeño, 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. \$\$\$

OTC 1250 S. Miami Ave. 305-374-4612

Over-the-counter service usually connotes the classic fast food "slider" experience: both greaseburgers and patrons are in and out quickly. At this casually cool gastropub, the counter ordering

system encourages the opposite feel, of comfy congeniality; it invites hanging out, just without the fuss of formal dining out – or the expense. Most plates are \$10 or under. Ingredient-driven dishes cover today's favorite food groups (various mac-and-cheeses, variously topped/seasoned fries, and more) with some unusual twists, like a scrumptiously lardon-laden frisée/goat cheese salad brightened by fresh peaches. Even the condiments are housemade. \$\$\$

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

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. \$-\$\$

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. \$-\$\$

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. \$\$

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 focaccia 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 Pokémon 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. \$\$

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 caucas, combining Peru's favorite starch, potatoes, with unique new sauces. \$\$\$

Pizzarium 69 E. Flagler St., 305-381-6025

Roman-style rectangular pizzas, served in square slices, have been available in the Miami area since the mid-1990s. But the familiar squares and Pizzarium's are similar only in shape. Main difference: dough, here allowed to rise for four days. The resulting crusts are astonishingly airy, as authentic Roman slices, intended as light street snacks, should be. Toppings, a rotating selection of nearly 30 combinations, are highlighted by quality imported ingredients – not to mention a healthy imagination, as the zucca gialla attests: pumpkin cream, pancetta, smoked scamorza cheese. \$

Pollos & Jarras 115 NE 3rd Ave., 786-567-4940

From Juan Chipoco, Peruvian chef/co-owner of seafood-centric Cvi.Che 105, this stylish but affordable two-level restaurant is centered around pollo a la brasa, as a huge rotisserie oven attests. Grilled steaks, unique sandwiches, anticuchos, and varied starters and sides are also served, but the must-not-miss is rotisserie chicken, marinated in roughly a dozen-and-a-half seasonings before a self-basting spin on the spit cooks it to incomparable juiciness. It's served with crisp fries and a substantial salad. Meals also come with a complimentary cup of aguadito – assertively cilantro-spiked chicken rice soup. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Porketta

43 NE 3rd Ave., 305-372-0034

Warm, juicy, served with succulent pieces of crisp crackling, herb-stuffed Italian porchetta (pronounced "porketta") roast, at its best, is hard to find even in much of Italy except during festivals. But every day is a festival here, where the real thing (not the dry deli-style pork roll slices that often pass for porchetta) is featured on a plate with broccoli rabe and cannellini; in the hefty Bombardino sandwich; or in three mini-sandwiches, convenient for sampling the place's three sauces. Several salads and carpaccios placate porkophobes. \$\$\$

Prelude

Adrienne Arsh Center
1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722

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

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. \$\$

Reggae Tacos

93 SE 2nd St., 786-425-9558

For diners on the go, who want food fast but not typical fast food, this place's Mexican-Jamaican fusion specialties are ideal. Taco or burrito shells encase inventive jerk pork (with mango, pickled onions, and cabbage), scotch-bonnet beef with avocado/cheddar salsa, vinegar/spice-marinated escovitch veggies, curried goat, and other island dishes that are normally plated entrées, transforming them into playful portable packages. And do save some stomach space for deep-fried "festival," sinfully scrumptious cornmeal mini-doughnuts sweetened with both vanilla-spiked honey and powdered sugar. \$

The River Oyster Bar

60 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw

and cooked – fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

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

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

Scalina

315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-789-9933

Comparisons between this new Tom Billante venture and the other (slightly pricier) Italian eatery in the same building are inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC's Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo's specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice's famed fegato (calf's liver and onions), upscaled with Lucania sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tartufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

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, complex 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? \$\$

TIKL Raw Bar & Grill

1450 Brickell Ave. #110, 305-372-0620

From restaurateur Claudio Giordano and chef Simon Stojanovic, the team behind longtime South Beach seafood favorite Altamare, this eatery is similar in food genre (contemporary American), though more global influences, especially from Asia, are evident here. Additionally, rather than serving conventional three-course meals, TIKL's menu focuses on small plates: creative crudos (like hamachi with yuzu, wasabi, and olive oil powder), plus robata-grilled and otherwise cooked items. Standouts: garlic/citrus-spiked local white shrimp with sweet shishito peppers; Thai curried mussels with crisped sushi rice; sinful bacon toast. \$\$\$

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. \$\$

Toro Toro

100 Chopin Plaza, 305-372-4710

Back before Miami's business district had any "there" there, the InterContinental's original restaurant was an executive lunch/dinner destination mainly by default. This replacement, from restaurant empire-builder Richard Sandoval, brings downtown power dining into this decade. As the name suggests, you can go bullish with steakhouse fare, including an abbreviated (in variety, not quantity) "rodizio experience." But the place's strongest suit is its pan-Latin small plates – upscaled refinements of classic favorites: crisp corn arepas with short rib, guacamole, and crema fresca; fluffier cachapas pancakes with tomato jam; more. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

Tre Italian Bistro

270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

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

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

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

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 multi-dimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and bursting ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$

Waxy O'Connor's

690 SW 1st St., 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

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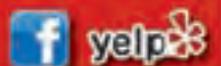
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bacon or banger "butty" sandwiches on crusty baguettes, served with hand-cut fries, the latter particularly terrific dipped in Waxy's curry sauce. \$\$\$

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

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo 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 restorlounge 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. \$\$

Acme Bakery & Coffee 3451 NE 1st Ave. #103, 786-507-5799

From Pious Pig Restaurant Group (whose other ventures include Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea! and the creative/rustic Federal Food, Drink & Provisions), this cozy bakery/café is, again, just what its neighborhood needed. The specialty is homemade artisan breads, from Colonial-era Sally Lunn to crusty sourdough made with wild midtown Miami yeasts; these honest loaves make the place's breakfasts, served all day, and lunchtime's sandwiches (like meatloaf and cheddar with onion marmalade) superior. Coffee is single-origin stuff from Wynwood's Panther. Also available: gift baskets featuring housemade preserves and pickles. \$\$

Adelita's Café 2699 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-1262

From the street (which is actually NE 26th, not Biscayne) this Honduran restaurant seems unpromising, but inside it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin American eateries, this one sticks close to the source and proves a crowd-pleaser. On weekends especially, the dining rooms are packed with families enjoying authentic fare like baleadas (thick corn tacos), tajadas (Honduras's take on tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

Basani's 3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-925-0911

Despite this tiny place's modern décor, the family-run ambiance and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic rolls, either, or sinful zeppole (fried dough) for dessert. There's more complex fare, like chicken à la Francese, too. And they deliver. \$\$

Bengal 2010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-1976

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

Best Friends 4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999

On a restaurant-starved stretch of Biscayne Boulevard, this spot serves the same sort of simple but satisfying Italian fare (antipasti, soups, salads, pizzas) as its older sibling, South Miami's Blu Pizzeria, plus burgers. The thin-crust, pliable pizzas, though lacking burn blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzones (like the blu oceano, 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. \$\$

Bloom 2751 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5443

Miami's most innovative art district is the perfect setting for this hip hangout, whose mad-genius menu proves that food is indeed one of the creative arts. Reinvented Latin/Asian street foods from chef Ricky Sauri (ex-Nobu) include spicy Spam-topped rice cakes; tuna tartare in seaweed "tacos"; a reina pepiada arepa, whose traditional mild chicken filling is replaced by shredded duck, avocado, tangy-sweet tamarind sauce, and Japanese mayo; an especially elegant Korean bibimbap; a vegan shitake-pumpkin tamale with nutty, cheesy natto sauce. For liquid art aficionados: cocktails like the eye-popping Tequila Beets (featuring roasted beet juice). \$\$\$

Buena Vista Bistro 4582 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-5909

If a neighborhood eatery like this one — which serves supremely satisfying bistro food — were within walking distance of every Miami resident, we'd be a helluva hip food town. Like true Parisian bistros, it's open continuously, every day, with prices so low that you can drop in anytime for authentic rillettes (a rustic pâté) with a crusty baguette, steak with from-scratch fries, salmon atop ratatouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Buena Vista Deli 4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945

At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's homemade French sweets, if you grab the last Paris-Brest, a praline butter-cream-filled puff pastry, we may have to kill you. \$-\$\$

Cafeina 297 NW 23rd St., 305-438-0792

This elegantly comfortable multi-room indoor/outdoor venue is described as an "art gallery/lounge," and some do come just for cocktails like the hefty café con leche martinis. But don't overlook chef Guily Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no discernable binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar 1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arsh Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed

crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos 3252 NE 1st Ave. #104 305-921-4373

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

City Hall the Restaurant 2004 Biscayne Blvd. 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust pizza topped with duck confit, wild mushrooms, port wine syrup, and subtly truffled béchamel; crispy calamari (rings and legs) with light, lemony tomato emulsion; and tuna tartar that is refreshingly free of sesame oil. Big portions and a full bar to boot. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Cheese Course 3451 NE 1st Ave. 786-220-6681

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

Clive's Café 2818 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-0277

Some still come for the inexpensive, hearty American breakfasts and lunches that this homey hole-in-the-wall has served for more than 30 years. Since about 1990, though, when owner Pearlina Murray ("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. \$



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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. \$

El Bajareque

278 NW 36th St., 305-576-5170

Dozens of little Latin American eateries, all looking almost identically iffy, line 36th Street. But this family-owned "bajareque" (shack) is one where you definitely want to stop for some of Miami's most tasty, and inexpensive, Puerto Rican home cooking, from mondongo (an allegedly hangover-curing soup) to motofongo, a plantain/chicharrón mash with varied toppings plus garlicky mojo. Housemade snacks are irresistible, too, and great take-out party fare: pork-studded pasteles, similar to Cuban tamals but with a tuber rather than corn masa dough, or empanadas with savory shrimp stuffing. \$

Egg & Dart

4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022

While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, an often heavy and cloyingly vanilla-saturated dessert, here custardy and enlivened by orange flavor. Extensive lists of mezze (snacks) and creative cocktails make the expansive, invitingly decorated space ideal for large gatherings of friends who enjoy sharing. \$\$\$

Egyptian Pizza Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-571-9050

Pizza, pita – hey, they're both flatbreads. So while many pizzas do indeed, as this halal place's name suggests, have initially weird-seeming Middle Eastern toppings, it's really not surprising that the Giza (topped with marinated lamb, feta,

olives, peppers, and pungently spiced cumin sauce) works at least as well as Italian classics. Additionally the menu includes interesting Middle Eastern fare like fowl, a hummus-like but lighter Egyptian dish of favas, tahini, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil. A brick oven makes both pizzas and homemade pitas superior. \$\$

18th Street Café

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

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

Five Guys Famous Burger and Fries

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Ave., 305-571-8341

No green-leaf faux health food here. You get what the name says, period, with three adds: kosher dogs, veggie burgers, and free peanuts while you wait. Which you will, just a bit, since burgers are made fresh upon order. Available in double or one-patty sizes, they're well-done but spurtingly juicy, and after loading with your choice of free garnishes, even a "little" burger makes a major meal. Fries (regular or Cajun-spiced) are also superior, hand-cut in-house from sourced potatoes. \$

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 house-made pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$-\$\$

Harry's Pizzeria

3918 N. Miami Ave., 786-275-4963

In this humble space (formerly Pizza Volante) are many key components from Michael's Genuine Food & Drink two blocks east – local/sustainable produce and artisan products; wood-oven cooking; homemade everything (including the ketchup accompanying crisp-outside, custardy-inside polenta fries, a circa 1995 Michael Schwartz signature snack from Nemo). Beautifully blistered, ultra-thin-crust pizzas range from classic Margheritas to pies with house-smoked bacon, trugole (a subtly flavorful – fruity, not funky – Alpine cheese), and other unique toppings. Rounding things out: simple but ingenious salads, ultimate 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? \$\$

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

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 tripele containing roast pork, bacon, Black Forest ham, provolone, and caramelized onions. \$\$

Joey's Italian Café

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

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

La Latina

3509 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-9655

At last, an authentic Venezuelan arepera (purveyor of home-made 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, yuppified/yaucified 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

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crusted salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, homemade pastries like lemon-crusted wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Mandolin Aegean Bistro

4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066
Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezzes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemon wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MC Kitchen

4141 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-9948
Chef/co-owner Dena Marino calls MC's food "modern Italian" – neither an evocative description nor explanation for why this place is one of our town's hottest tickets. But tasting tells the tale. Marino's food incorporates her entire culinary background, from her Nonna's traditional Italian-American kitchen to a long stint in Michael Chiarello's famed contemporary Californian eatery Tra Vigne, with pronounced personal twists that make eating here uniquely exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's "piadinas," salad-like seasonal/regional ingredient combinations atop heavenly homemade flatbreads. Cocktails feature ingredients from za'atar to salmon roe. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mercadito Midtown

3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423
Some people frequent this fashionable restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but 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 yongs 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 (crispy panko-crusted and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar

1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000
At NoVe, the restolounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts, Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oak Tavern

35 NE 40th St., 786-391-1818
With a festively lantern-lit oak tree on the outdoor dining patio and stylishly playful lamps mimicking oaks inside, chef/restaurateur David Bracha of River Oyster Bar has

transformed a previously cold space to warm. Food is equally inviting. The mostly small-plates seasonal menu roams the globe from supreme Vietnamese banh mi (with pork belly and foie gras) to down-home buttermilk biscuits with bacon butter, and homemade charcuterie. If available, don't miss Hawaiian-inspired steelhead poke; substituting the salmonlike but more delicate trout for the usual tuna transports this crudo to heavenly heights. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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)

Pasta Folie's

Shops at Midtown Miami
3252 NE 1st Ave. #118, 786-382-0205
In France the word "folie" can mean "extravagant." More often it means "madness." It's the latter translation that first comes to mind when perusing the menu of this French Rivera pasta/pizza fast-casual chain, whose concept is pastas, plus pizzas, from around the world – even Italy. Don't expect authenticity from the more exotic toppings; they basically contain one typical ingredient (along with a generic onions/peppers/veg assortment): bean sprouts in Thailand's spaghetti, pineapple in Bali's, curry sauce on India's. Do expect super-fresh sauces, made daily. Friendly staffers and fun. \$\$

Pieducks

3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550
(See Brickell / Downtown listing)

Pride & Joy

2800 N. Miami Ave., 305-456-9548
Behind this Wynwood warehouse façade you'll find pure Southern roadhouse, and the backyard patio is an even more relaxing place to kick back with beer, blues music, and barbecue from pit master Myron Mixon. Oddly, considering Mixon's many BBQ championships, the 'cue can be inconsistent. Our favorite choices: St. Louis ribs, tender without being falling-off-the-bone overcooked, and enjoyably fattier than baby backs; vinegar-doused pulled pork sandwiches, which, unlike meat plates, come with sides – fries, plus slaw to pile on for added juice and crunch. \$\$\$

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.

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, homemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$

Sake Room

275 NE 18th St., 305-755-0122
Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour Mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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

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. \$-\$\$

Shokudo World Resource Café

4740 NE 2nd Ave., 305-758-7782

At its former Lincoln Road location, World Resource's café was better known for people-watching than for its standard sushi/Thai menu. But as the new name signals, this relocation is a reinvention. The indoor/outdoor space is charming, but creative takes on popular pan-Asian street foods are the real draw. Travel from Japan and Thailand through Korea, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and beyond via light homemade momo, curried potato-stuffed Tibetan/Nepalese steamed dumplings; savory pulled pork buns with kimchi and crisped onions. Noodle dishes, hot or chilled, are especially appealing. \$\$-\$\$\$

South Street Restaurant & Bar

4000 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-5474

In the historic Buena Vista post office building, this "neo-soul food" restaurant features family recipes from chef Amarís Jones, a Philly native. Along with tasty traditional favorites like fried chicken or shrimp and cheese grits with low-country gravy, there are lightened classics (green tomatoes that are grilled, not fried, with basil cream aioli), plus a few items whose street cred seems to come from a Soul Train stop at the Bryn Mawr Country Club (surf and turf). Food comes with a soul soundtrack befitting the lounge vibe. \$\$\$

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

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. \$-\$\$

Wine Vault Miami

Shops at Midtown Miami
Fountain Circle #105, 786-691-2000

From a Wine Vault press release: "Over 1300 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. \$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$

Balans Biscayne

6789 Biscayne Blvd., 305-534-9191

It took longer than expected, but this Brit import's third Miami venue finally opened, and rather quietly – which has an upside. It's easier to get a table here (and to park, thanks to the free lot on 68th Street) than at Lincoln Road or Brickell. This, along with the venue's relatively large, open-to-the-street outdoor area, contributes to a more relaxed, neighborhood-focused vibe. The fun menu of global comfort food is the same (ranging from a creamy-centered cheese soufflé through savory Asian potstickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 pastes to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing – and budget-priced. \$

Buddha Sushi Bar

1071 NE 79th St., 305-677-3633

While the setting is still more low-rent/high-speed causeway than restaurant row, this stylish, much-more-than-sushi spot definitely brings the street giant steps toward destination-dining status. The invention and skill shown in makis like the Fruity (shrimp, salmon, tuna, whitefish, roe, asparagus, and peaches, dressed with creamy mustard sauce), or small plates like shrimp crullers with a red wine reduction, isn't surprising considering the crafter is Michael Asalie, original chef at downtown's Little Lotus. Order from the menu or grab something from the circulating "sushi river," whatever floats your boat. \$\$\$

Chef Creole

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

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

DeVita's

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

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

Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-3433

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese Taylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

East Side Pizza

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

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer entrées like spaghetti and meatballs, but East Side also has pumpkin ravioli in brown butter/sage sauce, wild mushroom ravioli, and other surprisingly upscale choices, including imported Peroni beer. As for the pizza, they are classic pies, available whole or by the slice, made with fresh plum tomato sauce and Grande mozzarella (considered the top American pizza cheese). Best seating for eating is at the sheltered outdoor picnic tables. \$

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

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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

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. \$

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. \$

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. \$\$

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 restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make – in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites – organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamma produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also carves out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$-\$\$\$

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$

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 Bhe!Papri chat, a savory snack featuring crisp chips topped with cilantro-spiked chickpeas, onions, potatoes, yogurt, and piquant tamarind sauce. \$\$\$

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. \$

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

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

Siam Rice

7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516

You'll find all the familiar favorite Thai and Japanese items here, and prices for curries and noodle dishes (all customizable regarding choice of protein, preparation, and heat level) are especially good at lunch. But don't overlook somewhat pricier specialties like a deep-fried yet near-greaseless boneless half duck with veggies in red curry sauce. There's also an unusually extensive list of salads, some with inventive fusion touches, like a grilled shrimp/soba salad featuring traditional Thai flavors (siracha chiles, fish sauce, lime) and Japanese green tea noodles. \$\$\$

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 foccchi pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heftier items like burgers and steak au poivre. And don't miss the sticky date/toffee pudding. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7818

On the menu of sushi-bar specialties plus a small selection of Thai and Japanese cooked dishes, there are a few surprises, such as a unique lobster maki that's admittedly huge in price (\$25.95), but also in size: six ounces of crisp-fried lobster chunks, plus asparagus, avocado, lettuce, tobiko (flying fish), 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337
A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using homemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored fians. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085
Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landy'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 specialties 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 e raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

oggi Caffè

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238
This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sabor Latin Restaurant & Cafe

1880 79th St. Cswy., 305-741-2020
This family-run restaurant serves big portions of homey traditional food from several Latin American countries, including Cuba (pan con bistec, ropa vieja), Mexico (nachos, tacos, quesadillas), and Peru (lomo saltado). But the specialty is Colombian classics, from snacks like empanadas to a bandeja paisa combo (grilled steak, chorizo, a gargantuan

crispy chicharron strip, fried egg, arepa, plantains, beans, rice). Particularly recommended: daily specials including two meal-in-a-bowl chicken soups, ajiaico, and sancocho. If you've wondered about the much-debated difference, here's where to test the taste. \$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570
"Cheap eats and a million-dollar view" is the sound bite manager Philip Conklin uses to describe this outdoor beach bar, hidden in back of a bayfront motel. The joint dates from South Beach's late 1980s revival, but the kick-off-your-shoes vibe couldn't be farther from SoBe glitz. The food ranges from classic bar favorites (char-grilled wings, conch fritters, raw or steamed shellfish) to full dinners featuring steak, homemade pasta, or fresh, not frozen, fish. \$\$\$

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638
(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Trio on the Bay

1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234
Several ventures have failed in this expansive indoor/outdoor waterfront space, but that's hard to imagine once you've experienced this stunning incarnation as an exciting yet affordable restaurant/nightclub where food definitely doesn't play second fiddle to entertainment. Former Crystal Café chef Klime Kovaceski created the original menu, and among his dishes still available is the filet mignon atop surprisingly pistachio-studded béarnaise sauce. Now there is a range of Mediterranean offerings as well, from grilled calamari steaks to mahi 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 focchi 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 ompah 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Rouge CineCafe

908 71st St., 305-865-5955
This friendly café's décor is indeed playfully red, and the "cine" refers to vintage films projected unobtrusively on a wall. But the main attraction is the French and Moroccan food, both genres as authentically homey as you'll find in the homes of those cuisines. For hearty eaters, exotically spiced tagine stews, like lamb with prunes, are the way to go. Grazers will find Rouge's bocaditos (evocatively French saucisson sec, or Moroccan merguez sausage with grilled onions and hot harissa sauce, both on crusty Boulart bread) irresistible – as are housemade desserts. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 Longsombon (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 Miampians eat here? Not ambiance. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363
Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public – always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambiance is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food – some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$

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-goopy-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 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.

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Brews like signature smooth yet exotic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe don't even need cream or sugar, much less frappe fro-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 nicely. \$\$

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 BBQ/burger master: Top Chef contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker produces mild-tasting 'cue ranging from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to more unusual items like hot-smoked salmon. As for burgers, many feature unique ingredients such as mayo flavored like red-eye gravy, with strong coffee, or the bun of the infamous Luther: a sweet-glazed mock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut. Costs are comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$

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-crustured 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 yellow-tail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

Casa Mia Trattoria 1950 NE 123rd St., 305-899-2770

Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnocchi with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini – "beggar's purses" stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$

Chéen-huyae 15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808

Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic from achiote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$

Chef Creole 13105 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-893-4246 (See Miami listing)

Flip Burger Bar
1699 NE 123rd St., 305-741-3547
Casual-chic burger bars, everywhere in South Beach, are still rare farther north. One reason this easy-to-miss venue is a must-not-miss for North Miami locals: The hefty half-pounders on fresh brioche buns include a scrumptious patty with Gruyere, mushrooms, and onion marmalade. The Fireman is a jalapeño/chipotle scorcher. There are even turkey and veggie variations. Other draws are hand-cut fries, beer-battered onion rings, a top-drawer beer list, budget-priced combo specials, conversation-friendly acoustics, and a South Beach rarity: free parking. \$\$\$

Giraffas 1821 NE 123rd St., 786-866-9007

Festooned with eye-poppingly colored panels and giraffes – subtler but everywhere – this first North American branch of a wildly popular, 30-year-old Brazilian fast/casual chain is the flagship of a planned 4000 U.S. Giraffas. Given that the steaks, especially the tender, flavorful picanha, rival those at the most upscale rodizio joints – and beat the sword-wielding grandstanders for custom cooking (because staff asks your preference) – we'd bet on giraffe domination. Overstuffed

grilled sandwiches, salads, even tasty veggie options are all here, too. The cheese bread is a must. \$\$\$

Happy Sushi & Thai 2224 NE 123rd St., 305-895-0165

Grab a booth at this cozy eatery, which serves all the expected Thai and sushi bar standards, including weekday lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet "Japanese home cooking" treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun 2188 NE 123rd St., 305-893-5711

At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$\$

Il Piccolo Café 2112 NE 123rd St., 305-893-6538

Talk about a neighborhood institution. The owners of this longtime Italian eatery remember frequent visits from Miami native Michelle Bernstein and her parents – when the celebrity chef was a kid. The place is still child-friendly, and though the "piccolo" space is indeed small, portions are prodigious. Most dishes will evoke nostalgia, including our own favorite white-wine-sauce-drenched sin – lemony egg-battered veal piccata with capers and artichokes. But there are surprises not found at most old school red-sauce joints, too, like lunchtime's surprisingly tasty Cuban sandwich. \$\$

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 tasset and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

Little Havana 12727 Biscayne Blvd. 305-899-9069

In addition to white-tablecloth ambiance, this place features live Latin entertainment and dancing, making it a good choice when diners want a night out, not just a meal. It's also a good choice for diners who don't speak Spanish, but don't worry about

authenticity. Classic Cuban home-style dishes like mojo-marinated lechon asado, topped with onions, and juicy ropa vieja are translated on the menu, not the plate, and fancier creations like pork filet in tangy tamarind sauce seem universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Los Antojos 11099 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-1411

If it's Sunday, it must be sancocho de gallina, Colombia's national dish. If it's Saturday, it must be ajiaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharron, eggs, sautéed sweet plantains, and an arepa corn cake) is available every day, as are antojitos – "little whims," smaller snacks like chorizo con arepa (a corn cake with Colombian sausage). And for noncarnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

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 roadside ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Pastry Is Art 12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Risson's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge 12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle bistro fare: frisée salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon vinaigrette; truite Grenobloise (trout with lemon/caper sauce); consommé with black truffles and foie gras, covered by a buttery puff pastry dome; perfect pommes frites, and equally perfect apple or lemon tarts for dessert. \$\$\$

Rice House of Kabob 14480 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-4899

Since 2006, South Beach's original Rice House has been serving up mountainous platters of basmati rice and Greek salad topped with Persian-style marinated/char-grilled meat, poultry,

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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-keiyar 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 frites” (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. \$

Tiny Thai House 12953 Biscayne Blvd., 305-895-1646

The space is tiny. The menu, which features Thai specialties but includes sushi plus Japanese appetizers and entrées, is not. Despite the huge selection of sushi/Thai restaurant standards, though, don’t overlook items harder to find in America, like “floating noodle” soup, a popular street food from Thailand’s boat-based market stalls; similar in favor to Vietnamese pho, the dish contains beef, bean sprouts, and noodles heaped in umami-rich beef broth. Among the nicely priced sushi selections, the Mylo roll (tuna, salmon, crab, avocado, and cuke, topped with tempura fish and eel sauce) is a tasty pick. Don’t miss sticky rice with mango for dessert. \$

Wong’s Chinese Restaurant 12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451

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 nostalgic hangout. New owners have made some changes, including a décor/ambiance upgrade (there’s now a patio lounge, with music) and an expanded menu featuring contemporary comfort foods like fire-grilled pizzas with fresh toppings (homemade mozzarella, etc.), several salads, and veggie burgers. But time-tested road food favorites remain: big beef burgers, hot dogs, and of course, Woody’s famous cheesesteak, done traditional Philly-style with shaved ribeye. You can even get Cheese Whiz. To drink, there are nine draft beers plus old-school shakes. \$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

8 Oz. Burger Bar 14815 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-1988

Celebrity chef Govind Armstrong’s first 8 Oz., in South Beach, almost singlehandedly started Miami’s burger craze, and when Armstrong severed ties with the Alton Road original, this location became his standard-bearer. Burgers are far from bargain-priced, but ingredients like grass-fed Wagyu beef, Niman Ranch lamb, and Humboldt Fog goat cheese, plus garnishes shining with chef-driven creativity (charred escarole, unctuous short rib, fried caper tartar sauce) justify the extra bucks. Kobe corn dogs, grilled artichokes with herb aioli, and stout-battered onions rings are also highly recommended. \$\$\$

Bamboo Garden 1232 NE 163rd St., 305-945-1722

Big enough for a banquet (up to 300 guests), this veteran is many diners’ favorite on the 163rd/167th Street “Chinatown” strip because of its superior décor. But the menu also offers

well-prepared, authentic dishes like peppery black bean clams, sautéed mustard greens, and steamed whole fish with ginger and scallions, plus Chinese-American egg foo young. Default spicing is mild even in Szechuan dishes marked with red-chili icons, but don’t worry; realizing some like it hot, the chefs will customize spiciness to heroic heat levels upon request. \$\$

Blue Marlin Fish House 2500 NE 163rd St., 305-957-8822

Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers. The featured item is still the house-smoked fish this historic venue began producing in 1938, available in three varieties: salmon, mahi mahi, and the signature blue marlin. But the smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable brisket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

Chipotle Mexican Grill 14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779

Proving that national fast-food chains don’t have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls “food with integrity.” The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn to rattas 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 16721 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don’t be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Tops among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo’s, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don’t miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft encountered in town. \$\$\$

Christine’s Roti Shop 16721 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouveia, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

Duffy’s Sports Grill Intracoastal Mall 3969 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124

Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy’s, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crust fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy’s different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There’s even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$\$\$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY 3427 NE 163rd St., 305-949-3318

In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don’t worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire’s Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you’ll be a happy camper, especially if you’re an ex-New Yorker. \$\$

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 cevina, 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. \$\$

Green House Organic Food Restaurant 3207 NE 163rd St., 305-594-6787

The name sounds a bit healthfoody, but there’s no crunchy granola here. Argentine-born, globally traveling chef Marcelo Marino, who’s also an instructor at Le Cordon Bleu Miami, uses only organic and/or sustainable produce and proteins to serve upscale avant-garde fusion fare: halibut atop traditional French Nantua (creamy lobster) sauce, with lemongrass/saffron-infused faro risotto; octopus with delicate black radish tempura and coconut/pineapple/tea foam; and similar stuff requiring mad skills in both classic cooking and molecular gastronomy. Breads, cheeses, and cured meats are all made in-house, too. \$\$\$

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, iceburg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant 3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami’s first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$

Hiro’s Sushi Express 17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there’s more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami’s Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsha 1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsha curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh’s sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it’s because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaissa. 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. \$\$\$

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 unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace 330 NE 167th St., 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There’s also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$

Kings County Pizza 18228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino’s flopsy-crust, ketchup, cheese-foody pies, stop here to sample a slice of the real thing. Admittedly, the crusts are not those of the coal-fired classics from Brooklyn’s legendary Tototonno’s or Grimaldi’s, but they’re similarly medium-thin and crisp – though not like a cracker; you can fold them for neat street eating, and they taste like honest bread, not cardboard. A variety of toppings are available even on slices. There are also whole pies with varied toppings. The “large” is humongous. \$\$\$

KoneFood 387 NE 167th St., 305-705-4485

Cones contain ice cream. Kones, however, contain anything and everything edible – at least at this eatery, locally founded (though the original concept of ultimate portable convenience meals, in sealed flatbread cones, came from Italy). In their melting-pot American version, cone fillings range from breakfast items like huevos rancheros to Thai chicken, chicken curry, coconut shrimp, kones kon lechon (slow-roasted pork with mojo), various pizzas, BBQ, chicken Florentine, healthy green salads, more. There are even desserts like a flambéed apple Kone à la Normande. Authentic Belgian frites, too. \$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill 14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo’s Market Café 16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381

It’s just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market’s packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it’s a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday’s hearty pasta fagirole, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$\$\$

Little Saigon 16752 N. Miami Ave., 305-653-3377

This is Miami’s oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it’s still packed most weekend nights. So even the place’s biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$\$\$

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

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Wednesday	\$8.50
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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 albónigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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/turkey 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. \$\$\$

Sports Grill

2995 NE 163rd St., 305-944-4552
Like the other five locations of this popular local mini chain (which originated more than 20 years ago), NMB's family-friendly sports bar/grill has walls lined with flat-screen TVs and a menu packed with all the classic game-watching munchies, some with Old South twists, like jalapeño poppers with pepper jelly dipping sauce. Must-haves are the charbroiled "special wings," meaty and mild. But for those who prefer more highly spiced wings, there are six additional varieties. Cool down with a craft beer from a list that changes weekly to avoid boredom. \$\$\$

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. Sceptical? 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 tuna – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Asia Bay Bistro

1007 Kane Concourse, 305-861-2222
As in Japan's most refined restaurants, artful presentation is stunning at this Japanese/Thai gem. And though the voluminous menu sports all the familiar favorites from both nations, the Japanese-inspired small plates will please diners seeking something different. Try jalapeño-sauced hamachi sashimi; toro with enoki mushrooms, bracing ooba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Caffe Da Vinci

1009 Kane Concourse, 305-861-8166
After renovations in 2010, this old favorite (since 1989) reopened with a hip new lounge – but no fixes to what ain't broke, notably handmade artisanal pastas sauced with high quality ingredients. Choose luxe stuffed models (like crab-filled ravioli with rich lobster sauce) or relatively pristine preparations like linguini with garlic, wine, and fresh littlenecks. Eating light? Make a meal of lavish salads or starters like true beef carpaccio – dressed, like the original from Venice's Harry's Bar, with creamy mustard sauce rather than mere olive oil. \$\$\$

Le Pine

1052 Kane Concourse, 305-861-1059
This upscale Lebanese restaurant serves dishes with the sort of understated sophistication that makes clear why Beirut was called the Paris of the East. You'll find familiar Middle Eastern favorites, but many have refinements that lift them above average: pita that's housemade, charmingly fluffy when warm from the oven; falafel incorporating flavorful fava beans with the usual ground chickpeas. Especially appealing are more uncommon items like crisp-fried cauliflower with tahini, feteh (a chick-pea casserole "iced" with thick yogurt), and buttery cheese/herb-filled sambusak pastries. Finish exotically with a hookah. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 Chatters (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256
It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and pimientos. This classic (whose carb components make it satisfying without à la carte sides, and hence a relative bargain) isn't on the menu anymore, but cooks will prepare it on request. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

17901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-2625
When people rave about New York pizzas' superiority, they don't just mean thin crusts. They mean the kind of airy, abundantly burn-bubbled, uniquely flavorful crusts that can only be consistently produced by a traditional coal (not wood) oven – like those at Anthony's, which began with one Fort Lauderdale pizzeria in 2002 and now has roughly 30 locations. Quality toppings, though limited, hit all the major food groups, from prosciutto to kalamata olives. There are salads, too, but the sausage and garlic-sautéed broccoli rabe pie is a tastier green vegetable. \$\$\$

Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd., 305-935-4029
One word: flagels. And no, that's not a typo. Rather these crusty, flattened specimens (poppy seed or sesame seed) are the ultimate bagel/soft pretzel hybrid – and a specialty at this bustling Jewish bakery/deli, which, since 1988, opens at 6:30 a.m. – typically selling out of flagels in a couple of hours. Since you're up early anyway, sample elaborately garnished breakfast specials, including unusually flavorful homemade corned beef hash and eggs. For the rest of the day, multitudes of mavens devour every other delectable deli specialty known to humankind. \$\$\$

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

75 years of fermenting pickle juice in the flooring. This clean 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. \$\$\$

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 makes 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. \$\$\$

BurgerFi

18139 Biscayne Blvd., 305-466-0350
It's not surprising that this Florida-based "better burger" franchise is one of America's fastest-growing. With décor that's relaxing retro yet futuristically earth-friendly (think recycled Coke bottle chairs), beverages ranging from milkshakes to craft beers, and sourced hormone/antibiotic-free, grass-fed Angus burgers on branded buns, for prices rivaling those for fast-food junkburgers, what's not to love? There are also vegetarian quinoa burgers or Kobe dogs, plus "accessories" including hand-cut fries, killer crisp-battered onion rings, freshly made, all-natural frozen custard, and toppings galore. \$

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. \$\$\$

Fresko

19048 NE 29th Ave., 786-272-3737
Forget thick, dough-wrapped potato knishes and blintzes slathered with sour cream. As its name suggests, this kosher dairy eatery eschews the starch/sugar-laden traditional favorites for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with

pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crusted designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$\$

Fuji Hana

2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080
A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians – for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield – might want to add the place to their "worth a special drive" list, thanks to chefs' winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Grill on the Alley

25701 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 charbroiled meats and seafood, plus classics like creamy chicken pot pie. New retro dishes are added quarterly, but our favorite remains Sunday night's prime rib special: a \$32 hunk of juicy beef that'll take care of Monday's meals too. \$\$\$

Il Migliore

3575 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 05-792-2902
This attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambience. As in Italy, dishes rely on impeccable ingredients and straightforward recipes that don't overcomplicate, cover up, or otherwise muck about with that perfection. Fresh fettuccine with white truffle oil and mixed wild mushrooms needs nothing else. Neither does the signature Pollo Al Mattono, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli

2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555
While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar

18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030
Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no glopily sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sues here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fringy outfit." \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Pilar

20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777
Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Pizza Roma

19090 NE 29th Ave. 305-937-4884
Despite its name, this homey hidden eatery serves not Rome's deep-cooked, crunchily-crusted pizzas but New York-style pies with medium-thick crusts pliable enough to fold in half for neat street eating. Unlike chains, though, this indie is accommodating, so if you want your crust thin and crisp, just ask. Also featured are Italian-American entrées like baked manicotti (that's "mani-goat", for those not from NJ) big enough to share, and sub sandwiches, here called "bullets," to put you in a Sopranos frame of mind. \$\$

Sushi Siam

19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955
(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Chef Philip Ho

16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338
Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crusted 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 Harrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/raspberry sauce, fish with an impeccable lemon beurre blanc, and a satisfying steak/frites (with peppery cognac cream sauce). We'd leave the American stuff to the kids. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Il Mulino New York

17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191
If too much is not enough for you, this majorly upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food – fried zucchini coins, salami, bruschetta with varying toppings, a wedge of quality parmigiano, garlic bread – that ordering off the menu seems superfluous. But mushroom raviolis in truffle cream sauce are irresistible, and perfectly tenderized veal parmesan, the size of a large pizza, makes a great take-out dinner...for the next week. \$\$\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kitchen 305

16701 Collins Ave., 305-749-2110
Offering eclectic American fare, this resort restaurant room, despite its contemporary open kitchen, has the retro-glam look of a renovated discotheque – which is what it was. In fact, it's still as much lounge as eatery, so it's best to arrive early if you want a relatively DJ-free eating experience. A seductive mango-papaya BBQ sauce makes ribs a tasty choice any night, but most local diners in the know come on nights when the restaurant features irresistibly priced seasonal seafood specials (all-you-can-eat stone crabs one night, lobster on another). A spacious dining counter overlooking the cooks makes the Kitchen a comfortable spot for singles. \$\$\$

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 pies; meltiply 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 counter, it's in Russian, and daily dishes are pretty much what the cooks feel like making. So look and point. We'd suggest pointing at cold yogurt-based soups like tangy okroshka (with cukes, egg, scallions, potatoes, and dill) or holodnik (similar, with beets added); eggplant roulades, stuffed with spiced shredded carrots, are also a refreshing summer dish. Hot choices include meatballs in rich cream sauce and chicken Kiev. \$\$\$

Timo

17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008
Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannelloni bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill

350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016
It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondiene, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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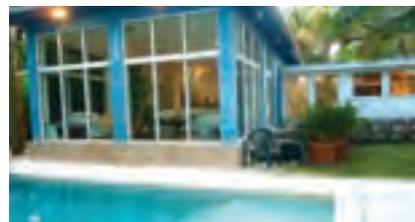
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