

BISCAYNE

March 2013

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Volume 11 Issue 1

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imes

MAGIC CITY MADHOUSE

STARRING MICHELLE SPENCE-JONES, TOMÁS REGALADO,
KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE, AND A CAST OF THOUSANDS

A gripping tale of political intrigue and criminal misconduct pg 22

The racially charged sequel: City divided, neighborhoods united pg 49

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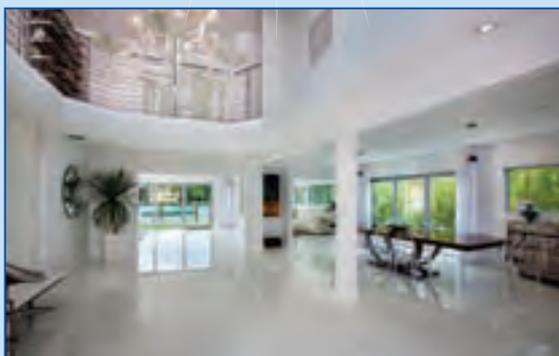
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <p>Feb. 26 - March 3 Les Misérables</p>		 <p>KODŌ ONE EARTH TOUR 2013: LEGEND MARCH 9</p>			<p>1 Miami Made Festival 7:30 PM C Les Misérables 8:00 PM Z "An unquestionably spectacular production from start to finish!" <i>New York Times</i></p>	<p>2 Les Misérables 2:00 & 8:00 PM Z Free Arsht Center Tours 12:00 PM Z Miami Made Festival 3:00 & 7:30 PM C</p>
<p>3 Les Misérables 2:00 & 7:30 PM Z "...a dynamically re-imagined hit! This 'LES MISÉRABLES' has improved with age..." <i>The Star-Ledger</i> Miami Made Festival 4:00 PM C</p>	 <p>FLAMENCO FESTIVAL MIAMI 2013 MARCH 14-17</p>	<p>5 Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra 7:30 PM K Ann Hampton Callaway joins Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops to celebrate Barbra Streisand!</p>	 <p>BROTHERS BECKETT by David Michael Singer March 7-24</p>	<p>7 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C "A play that speaks resonantly to its young characters contemporaries while entertaining a much broader audience!" <i>The Miami Herald</i></p>	<p>8 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C "Sirois' script is terrific. Think tight, tender, irreverent, vulgar and very, very funny!" <i>Miamiartzone</i> Miami City Ballet presents Program III 8:00 PM Z</p>	<p>9 Free Family Fest: "Wonderland" 2:00 PM Z Brothers Beckett 3:00 & 7:30 PM C Miami City Ballet presents Program III 8:00 PM Z Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Legend 8:30 PM K</p>
<p>10 Miami City Ballet presents Program III 2:00 PM Z "Symphonic Dances" now enters MCB's repertory for everyone to enjoy. Brothers Beckett 4:00 PM C</p>		<p>13 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C "The first world premiere for the Miami based Alliance Theatre Lab, <i>Brothers Beckett</i> is a gamble that pays off big time!" <i>The Miami Herald</i></p>	<p>14 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Beethoven's 9th 8:00 PM K Flamenco Festival Miami 2013 8:00 PM Z</p>	<p>15 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Beethoven's 9th 8:00 PM K Flamenco Festival Miami 2013 8:00 PM Z</p>	<p>16 Free Arsht Center Tour 12:00 PM Z Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Beethoven's 9th 8:00 PM K Flamenco Festival Miami 2013 8:00 PM Z</p>	
<p>17 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Flamenco Festival Miami 2013 4:00 PM Z "The body of dancers was absolutely top notch, especially the men!" <i>Flamenco Export</i></p>	 <p>BOSTON POPS THE STREISAND SONGBOOK MARCH 5</p>	<p>19 Fela! 8 PM Z "BOUNDLESS AND JOYOUS: This is as close as Broadway gets to fully immersive theatre." <i>New York Post</i></p>	<p>20 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Fela! 8 PM Z "Feels as if it could stretch easily to the borders of Manhattan and then across a river or two. There should be dancing in the streets!" <i>New York Times</i></p>	<p>21 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C "Brothers Beckett is a Neil Simon-esque message farce for the Generation X-Box crowd." <i>The Miami Herald</i> Fela! 8 PM Z</p>	<p>22 Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C Fela! 8 PM Z CUBOP - Celebrating Diz & Chano 8:00 PM K</p>	<p>23 Free Arsht Center Tour 12:00 PM Z Fela! 2:00 & 8:00 PM Z Brothers Beckett 7:30 PM C</p>
<p>24 Fela! 2:00 & 7:30 PM Z Brothers Beckett 4:00 PM C "Brothers Beckett is that rarity, a play that speaks resonantly to its young characters' contemporaries while entertaining a much broader audience." <i>The Miami Herald</i></p>		 <p>FELA! MARCH 19-24</p>	 <p>Cubop CELEBRATING DIZ & CHANO Mar 22</p>			

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Commentary: LETTERS

Interesting, Informative, and Meat-free

I wanted to thank Harriette Yahr for her excellent article regarding the vegetarian scene in Miami and Keith Kalmanowicz's journey to Miami ("Kitchen Question: What Would You Pay For Gourmet Vegan?" February 2012). It was super-interesting and informative.

I live close to the Earth-n-Us Farm and hope to visit it soon. I just wanted to let you know how much I loved the article.

*Javier Berezdivin
Miami*

Update: City to "Hidden" Walmart: Get Lost

Thank you to Biscayne Times for Erik Bojnansky's excellent article on Walmart's latest plan for Midtown ("Now You See It, Now You Don't," February 2012).

I'm glad Midtown Opportunities is taking steps to cushion the potential blow to the rest of the area. Concerns about traffic and congestion remain, and the article addresses those issues intelligently.

Those of us who like Midtown simply want it to do well, and we'd like Wynwood to thrive also. Is Walmart a threat to the rest of Midtown and Wynwood? I'm not sure. I hope the traffic and congestion issues will be handled with due attention to what is now a lively and creative area.

Without question, this part of Miami is gaining a higher profile. Again, thanks for your smart coverage.

*John Chellino
Miami*

Jen Went Off the Tracks

I find it necessary to point out a number of errors in Jen Karetnick's article on transit in Miami Shores in the February issue ("Mass Intransigence").

Ms. Karetnick is usually spot-on, but the errors in her February piece were glaring and I must ask that you note the necessary corrections. First, she refers to "an endless cargo train" and then states that the train whistles awaken her at least twice nightly. The correct term is "freight train" on board which cargo is carried. If she thinks that trains are endless, then I must remind her and your readers that without the several daily freight trains of the fabled Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, both I-95 and US 1 would operate in rush-hour traffic conditions 24 hours a day seven days a week.

As far as the train whistles go, I hardly need to remind readers that the railroad's tracks were laid on the banks of the Miami

River and the shores of Biscayne Bay in 1896; so complaining about the whistles is similar to buying a house at the end of an airport runway and then complaining that the planes are keeping the person awake.

Elsewhere, Ms. Karetnick has confused (and understandably; she not a railroad buff and this not a criticism) the three eventual passenger train operations that will, it is hoped, grace the FEC's tracks: All Aboard Florida (AAF), serving downtown Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando with a possibility at a later date of two or three trains making two or three additional stops; Amtrak, with service from New York to Miami via the FEC from Jacksonville to Miami, with as yet undetermined stops; Tri-Rail commuter service on the FEC, likely having a number of stops that neither Amtrak nor AAF will utilize. It is possible, if not likely, that if Tri-Rail comes to the eastern tracks, there will be a Miami Shores stop at a location not yet determined.

Unfortunately, Ms. Karetnick "misspoke" very badly when she wrote that the closest station to Miami Shores when AAF service is initiated, will be "in either Opa-locka or Golden Glades," neither of which is even remotely possible, especially since they are served by and on the line of the CSX railroad and are nowhere near the FEC's tracks.

Another grievous error was in Ms. Karetnick's allusion to litter and stray animals along the FEC right-of-way in Miami Shores. This is absolutely not the case. The right-of-way is cleaned regularly by the railroad, the Village, and property owners. Any litter is removed quickly.

There are also, contrary to the article's claims, pedestrian crossings (called, strangely enough, sidewalks), most of them with separate gates, flashing lights, and bells, at NE 96th Street, NE 6th Avenue, and NE 87th Street, the only three crossings in Miami Shores south of NE 107th St.

Because Miami Shores would be a stop for Tri-Rail commuter trains only, it is highly unlikely that a station will be built. Rather, a paved platform with canopies to protect patrons from inclement weather and with ticket machines on the platforms would be installed, and that would serve quite well for boarding or detraining purposes.

*Seth H. Bramson
Miami Shores*

Rubio As Racist? King As Crackpot

I don't think it's appropriate for Jack King to call Sen. Marco Rubio a racist

.....
Continued on page 10

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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 8

(“The GOP’s Boy Toy,” February 2012).

King wrote, “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.”

Where did he get that? C’mon, now.

*Rick Flores
Miami*

Elevation: One Answer to Life Among Morons

Thank you, Jim W. Harper, for another courageous “Going Green” article on our incredible stupidity (“Lucky, Though Probably Not For Long,” January 2013).

I am surrounded by people who do not believe in global warming. It’s comforting to be able to point to a local article to try to get them motivated. However, it’s a Sisyphean task that so far feels like a monumental waste of time.

Sometimes I think I should just cut my losses and move to higher ground.

*Sean Atkinson
Hollywood*

Aventura Cops Are Quick with Speed Traps, Slow with Bus Bullies

After reading Erik Bojnansky’s article about the dangers faced by pedestrians in Aventura (“Waiting to Happen,” January 2013), I want to say that in 22 years of living on East Country Club Drive, I have repeatedly made calls to the bus depot reporting runaway bus drivers doing 55-plus on that road.

It is tragic that lives have been dashed long before they should have to because of aggressive drivers.

The Aventura cops are aggressive and love to entrap, hiding in shadows and just waiting to leap like a wildcat at its prey. I cannot believe that they don’t see what we do!

This place should be named “City of Entrapment,” not “City of Excellence”! It is well known that Aventura is not the friendliest or nicest place, where people respect the rules or practice common courtesy

I send my condolences to the families.

*Name Withheld by Request
Aventura*

Horrors: Hate? Look in the Mirror, BT

Regarding Jim W. Harper’s “Park Patrol” column about the Eastern Shores Tot Lot (“Little Park of Horrors,” January 2012): Wow! Talk about hate.... *Biscayne Times* has it big time.

I am a happy resident of Eastern Shores. Even though we have no kids living here, my husband and I always say that we love the fact that there are so many children in the neighborhood. To hear them laugh and to see them playing together happily, makes the community that much nicer.

We in Eastern Shores love our kids as much as families in any other part of our planet love theirs. What would make us different?

Jim W. Harper’s article seems to focus on our “hate for children” more than the tot lot. I mean, he mentions quite a few times how much we hate.

I would *love* to see a follow-up with an explanation, and pursuit of whatever the real issue is.

Peace and love. No room for hate here.

*Marina Cacici
Eastern Shores*

Horrors: Sleaze-Free Zone and Proud of It

Jim Harper probably doesn’t understand that people who live in gated communities don’t want their children playing in parks.

And who can blame us for rejecting the Kardashians? One thing we don’t have here, which Harper didn’t acknowledge, is sleaze.

Why start now?

*Robert Livingstone
Eastern Shores*

Horrors: A Print Bully Should Apologize to Those Who Love the Park

Mr. Jim W. Harper must have written “Little Park of Horrors” without thinking first.

He could have said the kids in Eastern Shores don’t have a very nice playground to play in or that Eastern Shores doesn’t have room to build a playground for children in the area. But to have said that Eastern Shores hates kids when in fact we love kids — well, that’s a very strong and rude statement.

Now I understand why so many people in this world get hurt because of bullies like Mr. Harper. We will not tolerate and put up with his words. I send them back where they came from, I rebuke his words.

We in Eastern Shores deserve an apology, and Harper needs to take his words back.

*Ruth Pulido
Eastern Shores*



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It's Our Birthday!

After ten years, it's clear that reports on the death of print are greatly exaggerated

By **Jim Mullin**
BT Publisher and Editor

This issue marks the tenth anniversary of *Biscayne Times*. Founded by Skip Van Cel as *Biscayne Boulevard Times*, the name was shortened in January 2007, just about the time Skip and I began discussing the possibility of him stepping down and me stepping up, which I did that March.

So this issue also marks my sixth year as owner.

The name change was a smart move on Skip's part, for he recognized that the publication's future extended beyond the somewhat narrow confines of the Boulevard. He was right.

Acquiring *Biscayne Times* looked like a smart move on my part, despite dire warnings about the imminent death of print. I believed then, and still do, that the declining fortunes of some publications, especially daily newspapers, were creating opportunities for others, especially niche publications like *Biscayne Times*.

By targeting a limited number of neighborhoods, filled with intelligent, educated, prosperous, mature people who are lifelong readers (that would be you), and providing smart and sophisticated coverage of the places they live, a guy should be able to make a living. Maybe not the extravagant kind of living enjoyed by the old press barons, but certainly enough to get by.

I was right — for the most part. There were, however, some things I simply didn't anticipate, and they compounded the challenges inherent in operating any small business. For one thing, I and most other people did not foresee the housing collapse and consequent economic meltdown. The *BT*, of course, was just one among countless enterprises nationwide that suffered greatly as a result. And like millions of others, I survived by cutting back on everything and counting every penny. It was the business equivalent of a near-death experience.

A couple of other challenges I didn't anticipate were peculiar to this business of publishing.

The rapid rise of digital marketing took no one by surprise, and its success in luring advertisers away from print has been well documented. One byproduct of that did come as a surprise — at least to me.

A growing number of savvy business owners apparently saw a different kind of opportunity in the weakened condition of many print publications. They saw a chance to ask for advertising packages that included "value-added" perks, especially editorial coverage. In effect: We'll buy advertising in your moribund newspaper or magazine if you'll write flattering stories about us.

This phenomenon caught fire here in South Florida, though I'm not sure why. Perhaps because this is a crowded and highly competitive media market. For



November 2005



January 2006



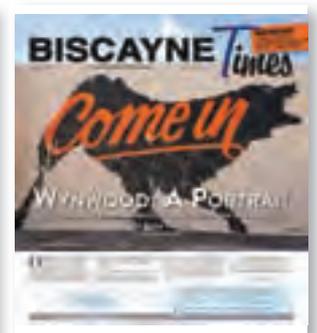
December 2007



September 2008



May 2009



December 2010

whatever reason, it spread rapidly and widely. Moreover, this coverage was a new editorial creature, not those clearly marked "advertorials" of years past. Readers were given no hint that the upbeat profile of Dr. X was, in fact, commissioned.

The willingness of editors to tolerate such deception was the other publishing challenge I couldn't have predicted. For anyone with even a passing allegiance to journalism ethics, the practice is abhorrent, practically immoral. My principled objections, unfortunately, were putting us at a competitive disadvantage, and by the spring of 2008, it became clear that I had to do something in response.

My answer was "BizBuzz," a column prominently headlined, "Our Sponsors: Sales, special events, and more from the people who make *Biscayne Times*

possible." While the column, written by Pamela Robin Brandt, has become very popular, it still isn't enough for some business owners, who demand much more than a mere mention among many other *BT* advertisers. We have managed to thrive without their money.

I have always believed, and still do, that our most important asset is not our base of advertisers. Rather it is you, our readers. Without your loyalty to *Biscayne Times*, we would be of no value to those advertisers. We would have nothing to offer them.

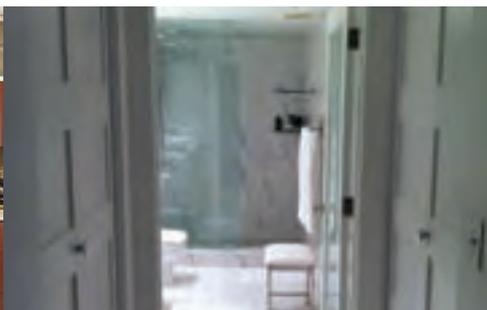
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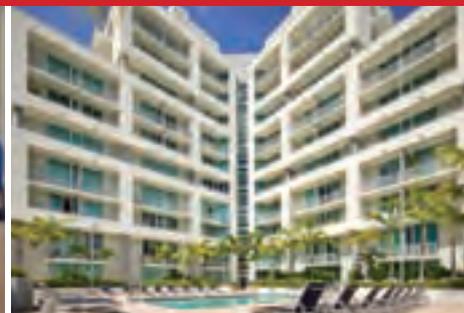
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Where Have You Gone, Al Bumbry?

Once a charming South Florida fixture, spring training baseball is now big business, and nowhere to be found locally

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

Growing up in the 1970s and early 1980s in Miami, I had a favorite month: March. It had little to do with the picture perfect days or impending spring break from school. Rather, it was because March always meant spring training was coming. (Pitchers and catchers, as they do now, reported in February, but teams began playing *games* in March.)

The Baltimore Orioles for years played their spring games in Miami Stadium, once a gem of a minor-league park that, by the 1970s, was beginning to show its age. The New York Yankees were literally just up the highway, in Fort Lauderdale. A little farther north, the Montreal Expos (today the Washington Nationals) and Atlanta Braves trained in West Palm Beach. Those willing to drive *all the way to Vero Beach*, as my father might have put it, could see the Los Angeles Dodgers play in historic Dodgertown.

As it so happens, my childhood coincided with an era in which all five of those teams were pennant contenders. (Yes, even the Expos, who made it to the National League Championship Series in 1981.) For baseball fans, there was no better place to be in March.

For those young enough to wonder what could possibly be so exciting about

exhibition games played in tiny, aging ballparks, a brief history lesson: There was once a time, in the not so distant past, when there was no ESPN; no cable channels of any kind, for that matter. Living in a city with no Major League team, all you got were two baseball broadcasts a week — one on Saturday afternoon, the other on Monday night. That's it.

If you were a kid growing up in South Florida then, big-league ballplayers lived mainly inside your TV set. Except for spring, when they materialized in the flesh, like Shoeless Joe in *Field of Dreams*, only instead of trotting out onto a cornfield in Iowa, they came here.

My dad and I would almost always try to catch the Orioles and Yankees when the latter came to Miami. Both were laden with stars. The Yankees had Reggie Jackson, Ron Guidry, and, later, Dave Winfield. The “hometown” Orioles had Jim Palmer and Eddie Murray, joined in the spring of 1982 by a 21-year-old rookie named Cal Ripken, who people said was going to be pretty good.

They also had a diminutive, fleet centerfielder named Al Bumbry, who, despite second billing, was the guy who made the O's go, spraying hits, stealing bases, and, inevitably, coming around to score. In spring training, Bumbry was forever smiling. Later, I learned he'd been in Vietnam, seeing enough action to earn a Bronze Star.



Maybe that explains his enthusiasm; nobody dies in baseball. Whatever the reason, his attitude was infectious. Buzzing with exuberance every spring, “The Bee” helped make March ballgames the sporting highlight of the year, at least for me.

So you'd think I'd be psyched about getting out to some spring games this month. But I'm not. It doesn't have to do with being older or not being as much of a baseball fan as I once was. I still love the sport. No, the problem is that so few teams come to South Florida for spring training now.

Where once the majority of clubs played here, in the so-called Grapefruit League, now only about half do, with the other half choosing Arizona's Cactus League for their spring training. The teams closest to us? The St. Louis Cardinals and Miami Marlins, who share a facility in Jupiter, more than an hour's drive away. Gone are the Orioles (Sarasota), Yankees (Tampa), Braves (Disney World), and Dodgers (all the way to Glendale, Arizona).

The reason for the changes of address, not surprisingly, is economics. Beginning in the 1990s, towns in Arizona and Florida began bidding against each other for the privilege of hosting spring

training, offering to build Major League teams spanning new ballparks, if only they would relocate.

One of these was Homestead, which spent \$20 million on a new stadium to lure the Cleveland Indians in 1993. Hurricane Andrew got there first; the Indians, not at all: The Tribe opted for a ten-year lease in Winter Haven, and currently spends the spring in Goodyear, Arizona. The stadium in Homestead was rebuilt and has mostly sat empty, never becoming a spring training venue.

It's a cautionary tale, or would be, if small cities cared to pay attention. Instead, they're too busy trying to lure teams, or in some cases, collect them. Most recently, Fort Myers, which already hosts the Minnesota Twins and Boston Red Sox (and where a bond issue financed construction of a new \$80 million stadium for the Sox), has made overtures to the Nationals, who are looking to leave Viera, Florida.

Millionaire owners looking for a handout? Cities desperate for “big league” status footing the bill for baseball stadiums? That's not spring training. In Miami, we call that the regular season.

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Rethinking Religion

As a pope resigns, a writer reflects on church and faith

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

I work for Jewish Colombians. Some of my best friends are gay. I work under many talented women. Most of my friends speak Spanish. My neighbors are from all over the world. Here in Miami, our ability to gracefully cope with difference is the only reason my life exists as it does today.

With these thoughts in mind, I reflected on the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. For the first time in nearly 600 years, a pope has chosen to resign, at a time when the Catholic Church is at its most embattled and religion in general causes more problems than ever. It fuels many of our world's deepest woes and threatens life, culture, secular institutions, and human rights on a daily basis.

Bertrand Russell once observed that, "in the modern world, the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt." Faith is the surest of all cocksure positions, existing in an unverified and inarguable plane outside reason and evidence. When set alight, it becomes nuclear fuel in the engine of action.

And the trouble with the stupid and cocksure has only worsened since Russell penned those words more than a century ago.

Today almost anyone with an Internet connection outside of China has access to the largest collection of free information in history, but intellectualism and reason

are still genuinely challenged by fanatical religiosity, from East to West. We know what this looks like in the East: radical Islam, suicide bombers, brutal executions, draconian laws, and the violent, humiliating oppression of women.

In the U.S., Christian-based religious fanaticism remains fervent. It's deeply in bed with conservative politics, so that to be a true conservative today, you must have full faith in a party doctrine baked from a slew of wildly unrelated ingredients. Take two parts free-market economics and low taxes, pepper in pro-war values and gun rights, add a dash of xenophobia, and top it off with skepticism toward climate change and evolution.

Those last two positions are my favorites. The American religious-political machine manufactured these false "controversies" over the past 25 years. Oil industry-backed pseudoscience frames climate change as debatable, while conservative pundits spin it into a liberal, intellectual conspiracy to give the government control of energy profits through overregulation.

Unfortunately the world's credible scientific institutions all agree that we're irreversibly screwing up the environment, which, oddly, doesn't seem to faze religious conservatives. If earth is a gift from God, one would assume they — not a bunch of godless scientists — would be the first to protect it, rather than support the unbridled rape of its natural resources.

The second "controversy" invented by religious conservatism is the false



debate over evolution. What was once a fringe concept is now a full-blown movement affecting educational policy in the U.S. The non-science known as "intelligent design" thrust itself onto the world stage with the misleading slogan, "Teach the controversy."

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calls creationism what it is: A "war on the theory of evolution... [that] originates in forms of religious extremism which are closely allied to extreme right-wing political movements." Leaders from nearly every developed nation where creationism entered public discourse have rejected it, as well as the idea that a "controversy" exists.

Every nation except one.

In the year 2013, skepticism of Darwinian evolution is taught in a handful of American public schools, thanks to the efforts of people with absolutely no scientific training — just one book, and hearts overflowing with religious conviction.

Pope Benedict's resignation comes at a time when religions continue to battle one another, and secular humanism is at war with religion itself.

In the past, when one's life barely extended past the edge of town, churches were central to both city and spirit. They were places where the needy found

help, the bewildered found answers, and where neighbors could rely on a level of tribalism to forge trusted relationships.

Today, in countries where average people are no longer without resources, churches have come to mean less. In Scandinavian cultures, which rank among the world's happiest, religion has become quite useless. In fact, across the world, there's an almost perfectly inverse relationship between the importance of religion and general prosperity (the U.S. being a rare exception).

Churches, meanwhile, continue to suffer from their inability to adapt. As societal power structures, they are a threat to modern values, and the superhuman power of "faith" is anathema to reasoned existence, a position best expressed by the late Christopher Hitchens. His eviscerating prose stripped religion of its gilded robes and exposed it as a threat to peace, happiness, and human progress.

There's a reputed ancient Chinese curse that says, "May you live in interesting times." I think we do. I'm just thankful to exist in a time and place where humans can be valued not by the empty measure of belief, but by the objective weight of character and action.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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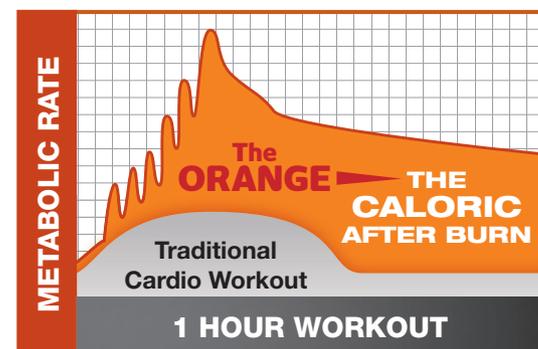
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BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Renewal, revitalization, replenishment, rebirth, rebuilding, restoration, rekindling, regeneration, and all those other words beginning with the prefix “re-” (meaning “again”): March is indeed the month for RE-words. Because once again, spring has REturned! The vernal equinox on March 20 signals that this is the season for starting anew.

Certainly BT advertisers seem to think so. This month’s “BizBuzz” news is dominated by the idea of REnewing minds, bodies, spirits, homes, careers, wardrobes, dreams... Whatever your hopes, you’ll find help from our friendly neighborhood businesses.

Out of R-E-S-P-E-C-T for International Women’s Day on March 20 (not to mention Aretha Franklin’s birthday, March 25), ladies first.

This month’s sweetest inspiration comes from Felicia Hatcher, who turned a disastrous accident — a full-face fall while chasing an ice cream truck in high heels — into cold gold: Feverish Pops, popsicles REinvented for grown-ups. Featuring fresh fruits/herbs rather than kidsicles’ artificial ingredients, and sophisticated flavor combinations (pineapple basil, watermelon/ginger vodka, more), the treats were originally sold from carts — non-rolling ones. But those in high

heels may prefer the even more stationary **Fever Pop Shop** (3252 NE 1st Ave. #120, 305-482-1832), opened two months ago in the Shops at Midtown Miami.

Whether you’re a sewing maven or just a novice with a needle and DIY fashion dreams, you’ll rejoice at the RElocation of new advertiser **R.M. Fabrics Boutique**, from a not so convenient neighborhood west of I-95 to the hip heart of BT territory (901 NE 79th St., 305-687-0966). Restocked by proprietor Paule Belony: the astonishing variety of every-occasion fabrics (plus sewing accessories and notions) for which R.M. has long been famous. And 3000 square feet of space also leaves room for innovations, including a Saturday sewing instructional series, tentatively scheduled to start March 23.

If you’re a golfer, or shop for one, you won’t want to miss the semi-annual tent sale at **Palm Beach Golf** (14791 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-7030), March 21-23, featuring great prices on clothing, shoes, gloves, golf balls, much more. Actually the store’s Miami location will have the sale inside, because its outdoor plaza is too small for a tent huge enough to hold all the sale items.

With a REplenished wardrobe, you’ll need hair to match. Visit **The Cutting Room** (1666 79th Street Cswy., 305-868-8725), a new advertiser that offers \$30 haircuts for women plus frequent nicely priced specials. And while you’re there,



ask partners (in work and life) Kevin and Francis Balboa about the “No Flip Balboa Comb,” invented at the shop and premiering at Fort Lauderdale’s “I” Beauty Show March 3-4. Inventor Kevin sez the ergonomic comb does sectioning, teasing, highlighting, and more in half the time of old school combs.

Thinking of upgrading your career path? According to Dennis Esposito, managing partner of **Century 21 King Realty** (3495 NE 163rd St., 305-651-6161), the real estate market is REbounding, with prices going back up owing to international demand — so much so that the company is now hiring new agents for its team of the best and brightest. So call if you’re interested in movin’ on up to the longest-established Century 21 firm in South Florida (or, of course, if you’re interested in a great new home).

At Esslinger-Wooten-Maxwell Realty Miami Beach (419 Arthur Godfrey Rd., 305-329-7718), the **Nancy Batchelor Team** has just announced a new member: Anna Moreno-Nava. A native Miamian, Anna has been familiar with the local luxury real estate market practically from birth, as a result of studying her mom, Tina, flipping luxe houses for fun.

If you need to REjuvenate your existing home, new advertiser **Antique**

2 Chic (2751 N. Miami Ave. #3, 305-573-3477) has, in its new Wynwood boutique, a selection of one-of-a-kind décor finds so varied in era and style that they virtually escape categorization. Owners call their stock “home couture.” Expect items ranging from slip-covered sofas to spa candles to coffee-table books, and a 20% discount if you bring in this issue’s ad.

The name of **Modern Home 2 Go**, a dozen blocks north in the Design District (270 NE 39th St., 305-572-1222), makes it crystal clear what era of décor buyers can expect. The surprise is the showroom’s astonishingly affordable prices. This month’s new surprise is a just-opened outdoor showroom, next door at 286 NE 39th St., with weather-appropriate lounging, bar, and dining sets that’ll get your home’s outside entertainment areas looking as striking as its insides. And prices are also shockingly low.

Spring also means less-than-fun spring cleaning time, traditionally a month on one’s hands and knees with a scrub brush. It doesn’t have to be that way. Call in the **Grout Doctor** (785-522-5433, www.groutdoctor.com), who, since 1992, has been cleaning, sealing, staining, replacing, and otherwise REpairing tile floors’ grout — way better than you

Continued on page 20



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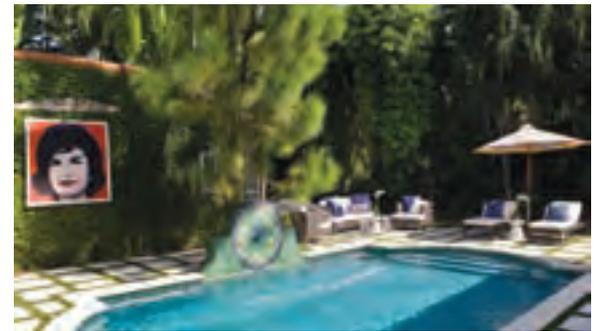
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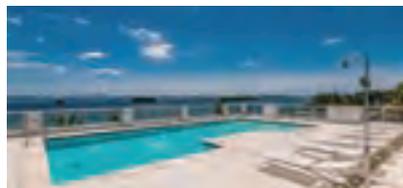
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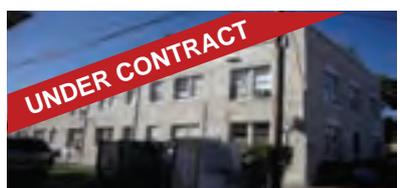
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Our Sponsors: MARCH 2013

BizBuzz

Continued from page 18

could. Naturally, they do the same for the scuzzy tiles, too. See this issue's ad for a 20% discount off any job.

REpelling pests is not only *not* fun but not something you should try at home, kids, if the pests are iguanas. Wild adults bite big, scratch deep, devour landscape plants, and dig holes to access good nesting areas — in the process destroying roofs, house foundations, you name it. Who ya gonna call? **Blue Iguana Pest Control** (855-525-5656). The company uses cunning barrier devices to make your yard about as iguana-friendly as an alligator (one of the lizards' few Florida natural enemies), trapping only if the occasional lazy lizzy won't leave. Of Blue Iguana's many services, 95% are preventative.

Keeping iguanas out of your home or car: good. Getting locked out of your home or car: not good. Call returning advertiser **AAA Miami Locksmith** (3501 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-9320). The full-service company also sells/install safes, doors, and security hardware.

With weather due to start warming up by March's end, you'll want to make sure your pool is in shape for summer, and new advertiser **Pinch-A-Penny Pool and Patio Spa** (9071 Biscayne Blvd., 786-518-3193) can do that for you. They'll do a free water test (pH, dissolved solids, and more), advise you about how to keep your pool healthy, and provide all necessary pool chemicals and parts for REpairs.

Fans of vintage hi-fi equipment know it's virtually impossible to get it REpaired. So jot down the name and number of new advertiser **Beta Electronics** (669 NW 118th St., 305-688-2664), a shop that has both the parts and the expertise to fix your old amps, speakers, even record players. Owner and one-man show Roy Wright was the subject of Gaspar González's *BT* cover story "For the Love of Audio" (August 2012).

Elderly cars are often problematic, too, but one of our *BT* staffers swears that her geriatric, 16-year-old car (that's 120 years in people years) is still going strong solely thanks to new advertiser **Munich Autohaus** (12400 NE 13th Pl., 305-893-5958), where the specialty is BMW service and engine repairs. This month they're offering a free 27-point vehicle check-up (no purchase required), and a \$90 synthetic oil change.

It goes without saying that kids' whole lives can be REdirected for the better with the right learning experience. So parents, welcome **William Jennings Bryan Elementary Museums Magnet School** (1201 NE 125th St., 305-891-0602), a new advertiser that's also an historic landmark. What the school wants readers to know is that pre-K through grade 5 students, especially "out-of-boundary" candidates in Miami Shores, Sans Souci, Keystone Point, Bal Harbour, and Bay Harbor Islands, will be accepted even this late in the school year, to finish the term in an artistic environment that emphasizes exploration, invention, and inquiry through ongoing visits to museums and cultural institutions.

And **Monsignor Edward Pace High School** (15600 NW 32nd Ave., 305-623-PACE ext. 212) continues to excel in both education and fun. Three top history students (Adrian Verdin, Kenny Gomez, Carlos Gonzalez) have recently been selected to attend the Florida American Legion Boys State program this summer, to learn how the government works. We hope they clue us in when they get back. Meanwhile, all can understand *Legally Blonde, the Musical* presented by Pace's Drama Club and International Thespian Honor Society. Performances are April 16, 17, and 18; visit www.pacehs.com for tix and further info.

Adults have several outstanding educational and cultural enrichment opportunities during March, too, including two workshops by health coach Diane Moura, owner of **Atlantis Natural**, located on the second floor of the Grand condo building (1717 N. Bayshore Dr., #218). On March 2, from 2:30-4:00 p.m., certified aroma therapist and professional chef Cindy Hill will give you the full rundown on essential oils, from history to health uses, and guide participants in creating their own blend. On March 9, from 1:00-5:00 p.m., Diane will lead a family-oriented "yummy workshop" on healthy cooking; included are a lecture, hands-on cooking demonstration, a tasting, and recipes to take home. For pre-registration (required): 305-379-2722 or www.atlantisnatural.com.

Hey, art lovers. It's road-trip time, up to **Scan Design's** Hollywood showroom (4150 N. 28th Terr.) for the thought-provoking contemporary furniture firm's sixth annual "Fall in Furniture Love" art event, March 23 from 6:00-9:00 p.m. The main exhibit features up-and-coming artists' interpretations of what it means

to fall in furniture love. We haven't the vaguest idea, but it sounds fun, as do extras like live entertainment, gourmet food, and drinks. Proceeds go to Habitat for Humanity. Info and RSVP: www.fallinfurniturelove.com.

To celebrate Dade Heritage Days, new advertiser **Downtown Miami Partnership** and Dade Heritage Trust present an event even history haters have to love: "A Taste of Historic Downtown Miami," a sort of progressive cocktail party that pairs a peek into Miami's architectural heritage with something Miamians already know and love: food and drink. Stops are at nine historic buildings, three of which are now restaurants/lounges; additional food and drink is provided, in part by the Miami Culinary Institute, at three other landmarks. For info and REservations (required): 305-358-9572.

And for writers (or those serious about becoming writers), the Center for Literature and Theatre at Miami Dade College will be presenting the **Miami Writers Institute**, four days of intensive workshops on fiction, nonfiction, poetry, publishing, and more. Also offered: one-on-one manuscript consultations; lunchtime reads; and "Pitch-O-Rama 2013!" — a one-minute pitch to a panel of industry pros. Register now at www.flcenterlitarts.com or call 305-237-3940; the Institute isn't till May 8-11, but workshop space is limited.

On to literal enrichment, our favorite being the rich but cloud-light berry-studded mini-flans at new advertiser **B Sweet** (20 NE 41st St., 305-918-4453), a homey-feeling mom-and-café in what was once an actual home — one of the Design District's rare residential apartment buildings. The very hidden location seemed destined to make this newly opened eatery one of those "best-kept secret" spots. But sufficient word of mouth has already gotten around regarding veteran pastry chef Tom Worhach's remarkable desserts that breakfast/lunch hours have already been extended: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

REplenish yourself any weekday morning this month with one of David Cohen's blue-plate breakfast specials, described in this issue's ad for **Bagels and Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435). Just remember to schlep the BT along with you so David knows we sent you — or preferably, if it's a Friday (when our personal fave meal deal includes nova, eggs, and onions; a bagel; choice of home fries, grits, or oatmeal;

OJ; and coffee or tea), remember to bring us along with you.

We regret to remind you that after this month of renewal comes a day of dread: April 15, income tax time. If you've been tackling your own tax forms the past few years because professional preparers are too expensive, check out **Miami Financial Center** (12573 Biscayne Blvd., 786-329-9950). It'll seem wise to REprofessionalize after seeing the miraculously reasonable prices this new advertiser charges for taking the whole mess off your hands: \$45 for students and singles with just one W-2; \$115 for the infinitely more mindboggling taxes of freelancers, independent contractors, and self-employed people. (Note to non-Spanish speakers: Don't worry about that, either. Olga and Michael Fidlin, a Russian mom-and-team, speak charming English.)

Frankly, just writing about taxes gives us the vapors. So it's darned good timing to hear from Chris MacCleod, general manager at **The Corner** (1035 N. Miami Ave. #101, 305-961-7887) — downtown's warmest-looking, coolest-vibed late-night eating/drinking spot — that the place just this month initiated beer and spirits "flights." The samplers feature four glasses of one particular monthly changing beer or liquor style, each of the four made by different brands and served together to compare and contrast. March's spirit style: Japanese whiskey. March's beer style: Belgian India Pale Ales, which run up to 12% alcohol (average beers are around 5%). Enjoy your certain attitude REadjustment.

Finally, even if anticipation of next month's tax crap has you down, anticipation of one unique new advertiser's upcoming opening will surely raise your spirits: the **Butcher Shop Beer Garden & Grill** (165 NW 23rd St., 305-846-9120). Owner Igor Niznik's very continental concept is to sell prime (yes, truly prime-grade) meats, custom-cut and trimmed as old-fashioned butcher shops used to, for customers to either take home or take to the indoor/outdoor compound's festive beer garden for open-fire grilling and dine-in enjoyment. The only snafu in the way of an early April opening: City of Miami permitting, pending since 2011. Isn't it fun to have an evil government villain this time of year that is *not* the IRS?

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

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Some say it's the lawsuit from hell.
Some say it's the product of deranged minds.
It's the legal brief that reads like a screenplay!

Starring: COMMISSIONER MICHELLE SPENCE-JONES MAYOR TOMAS REGALADO STATE ATTORNEY KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE

This past December a lawsuit was filed in Miami's federal court. It was unusual in several ways.

First, it was filed by a public official, Miami City Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, who named as defendants two other public officials, Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado and State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. The suit makes 16 claims against them, plus two of Fernandez Rundle's employees, ranging from civil rights violations to malicious prosecution to racketeering.

Lawsuits like this are rare because public officials are broadly protected by immunity granted to them while performing their sworn duties. Attorneys for the defendants make exactly that point in their responses to the lawsuit. "At all times germane to the events giving rise to this action, Rundle was the State Attorney," Fernandez Rundle's attorneys write. "And because she was the State Attorney, Rundle is immune from suit for any conduct that was intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process or that did not violate any clearly established statutory or constitutional right that a reasonable person would have known of."

The well-established precedent of immunity aside, Spence-Jones's lawsuit takes direct aim at the four defendants' conduct in office.

The court action is unusual in another way: Unlike most legal documents, it is written with great dramatic flair — so much so, in fact, that we've decided to publish some 12,000 words from it.

That's less than half the complete lawsuit, which also distinguishes it. This is a very, very lengthy and detailed court pleading, available in its entirety at www.biscayne-times.com, along with defendants' responses.

The commissioner's lawsuit is beginning to work its way through the judicial system at the same time another political drama is unfolding in Miami, also involving Spence-Jones and Regalado, along with Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff and others.

That highly charged drama revolves around federally mandated redistricting of the City of Miami's commission districts. Every decade, following completion the U.S. Census, voting districts at all levels (federal, state, and local) must be evaluated using criteria outlined in the federal Voting Rights Act and, locally, in Florida state law.

Demographic changes over the previous ten-year period often result in the need to adjust district boundaries. That is exactly what is under way now in Miami's

District 2 (Sarnoff) and District 5 (Spence-Jones). The stakes are high and so are the emotions. Please turn to page 49 for Erik Bojnansky's article "Power in Numbers."

— Jim Mullin, *Biscayne Times* editor

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

This case arises from a shocking, nefarious scheme by Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado and State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle to remove Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones from her elected position as Miami City Commissioner.

Serving as the investigatory, police, and prosecutorial arm of the mayor, Rundle, aided by assistant prosecutor Richard Scruggs and investigator Robert Fielder, manufactured false evidence, hid and withheld exculpatory evidence, intimidated and manipulated witnesses, defamed Spence-Jones, and repeatedly attempted to manipu-

investigations and arrests, and manipulating the criminal process and interfering in internal commission politics to keep Spence-Jones off the commission.

In the notorious assistant prosecutor Richard Scruggs, Rundle found the perfect right-hand man to destroy Spence-Jones. Scruggs had been criminally charged by a foreign government, found "clearly negligent" by the U.S. Department of Justice for his handling of the Waco investigation, criticized by Florida courts for "very unprofessional" conduct and withholding of evidence from the defense, and even carried a personal vendetta against Spence-Jones's defense lawyer. In their efforts, Rundle and Scruggs were aided by their investigator, Robert Fielder.

This civil-rights action seeks damages for defendants' conspiracy, a conspiracy that involved manufacturing evidence and

Carey-Shuler that Spence-Jones had forged her name and stolen from Miami-Dade County.

It took years to unravel these lies, years of persistent, dogged investigation by Spence-Jones's lawyer, Peter Raben. As Carey-Shuler's lawyer later said after defendants' scheme unraveled, the SAO "lied to her [Shuler]," too.

Defendants perpetrated quite a scheme: two contrived political corruption cases, both relying on a star witness the SAO Defendants lied to and manipulated, both who later learned that prosecutors tricked and defrauded them. But the goal in both cases was the same: Remove Spence-Jones from the commission, and ruin her as a potent political force and rival of the mayor.

Even by the sometimes sordid standards of Miami politics, the Rundle-Regalado conspiracy stands out for its brazenness. As a result of defendants' prosecution-laden brand of power politics, Spence-Jones's life was virtually destroyed. She lost her liberty, her job, her reputation. Her constituents lost a powerful voice for the people of Miami. For nearly two long, lonely years, Michelle Spence-Jones fought to reclaim her liberty and her good name. Now it is time the people who perpetrated this outrageous injustice finally be held to account.

SPENCE-JONES IS ELECTED COMMISSIONER; POPULAR WITH HER CONSTITUENTS, UNPOPULAR WITH REGALADO

In 2005 Spence-Jones was elected commissioner for District 5 in the City of Miami. In that election, Spence-Jones defeated Richard Dunn in a run-off vote.

The Miami City Commission is a powerful and important legislative body in Miami. The commission can pass ordinances and adopt regulations. There are only five commissioners in Miami, each serving one of five districts in the City of Miami. Commissioners are re-elected every four years.

District 5 is largely African American, and one of the poorest districts in the City of Miami. Spence-Jones, who is also African American, was a powerful voice for her community. She quickly developed a reputation for independence and loyalty to her constituents, often fighting powerful, moneyed, and entrenched interests for the sake of what she believed to be the good of her district and the city.



late the political process in a corrupt attempt to remove, arrest, imprison, and forever ruin a dedicated Miami public servant.

And when the scheme unraveled, when the witnesses realized they had been lied to, when the exonerative evidence could no longer be suppressed, Rundle and her team covered up their own wrongdoing, recklessly and falsely accusing Spence-Jones and her well-respected defense counsel of yet more crimes, to the entire world.

The primary players in this fraudulent enterprise were, first, the mayor of Miami, Tomás Regalado, Spence-Jones's political rival, who was unable to control Spence-Jones's critical vote on the powerful Miami City Commission.

Second, State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Regalado's friend and political ally, who shared a web of cozy connections and dealings with the mayor. Rundle took a personal interest in the downfall of Spence-Jones, repeatedly defaming her in public, overseeing her

concocting baseless corruption charges in two separate cases: the Armando Codina case, and the Barbara Carey-Shuler case.

In the Codina case, the Office of the State Attorney for Miami-Dade County (SAO) told Codina that Spence-Jones was a thief, had stolen his money, and had induced him to contribute to a nonexistent charity as part of a nonexistent charity event. Each and every statement was a deliberate lie. But it took years to unravel these lies, years while Spence-Jones remained falsely accused of bribery and grand theft, years while she remained off the commission. When Codina finally learned about the SAO's deception, he publicly pronounced the prosecutor [Scruggs] a "serial liar."

In the Carey-Shuler case, the SAO had definitive proof that... Carey-Shuler had authorized payment to a company affiliated with Spence-Jones for a neighborhood rebuilding project. Instead, the SAO hid the documents and falsely told

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Magic City Madhouse

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From late 2001 through 2009, Manny Diaz was the mayor of Miami. During part of his tenure, and before Spence-Jones was elected a commissioner, she worked for Mayor Diaz as a city employee. When Spence-Jones became commissioner in 2005, she and Mayor Diaz were political allies.

For example, Spence-Jones and Diaz worked together on low-income-housing and economic-development projects in Spence-Jones's district, and on parks initiatives.

Regalado also served as a city commissioner during the 2005-2009 period. Regalado came from a somewhat different school of politics than Spence-Jones, a school based on friendship, patronage, and political favors.

Regalado and Diaz became political enemies, and fought frequently during Regalado's tenure on the commission. Regalado was known as "Dr. No" on the dais: If Diaz and Spence-Jones favored a commission resolution or ordinance, Regalado was likely to vote "no."

The commission had a delicate balance of power during the 2005-2009 period. A majority of three out of five votes was necessary to carry an item, and Spence-Jones was usually the swing vote on major issues before the commission. Commissioners Angel Gonzalez and Joe Sanchez were usually on the side of Mayor Diaz; Regalado and Marc Sarnoff (elected in November 2006) were usually on the other side. With Spence-Jones's swing vote, Mayor Diaz's initiatives usually carried the day.

In short, Spence-Jones was often the key vote on the commission, on important issues such as the Marlins stadium.

THE OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY: RUNDLE FOR OVER 19 YEARS

The Miami-Dade Office of the State Attorney, 11th Judicial Circuit, is the prosecutorial office in Miami-Dade County, which includes the City of Miami.

On March 12, 1993, after being appointed to succeed Janet Reno (who left the position to become President Clinton's Attorney General), Katherine Fernandez Rundle became the State Attorney, the top official at the SAO.

Rundle's office, however, is an elected position. Since 1993 Rundle has been dependent on votes to maintain and continue her position as the State Attorney. Rundle has now been the State Attorney in charge of the SAO for over 19 years.

As the State Attorney, Rundle has had responsibility for overseeing every aspect of the SAO, including investigations run by Scruggs. Scruggs was a high-ranking prosecutor in the SAO's public corruption unit until shortly after the SAO's high-profile losses in the two cases against Michelle Spence-Jones.

REGALADO AND RUNDLE: A TEAM

Rundle was and is a close political ally of Regalado. They shared political interests, staff, and as set forth below, have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship.



Prosecutor Richard Scruggs was called "a serial liar" by Armando Codina.



Janet Reno's appointment as U.S. Attorney General paved the way for Katherine Fernandez Rundle.

For example, Rundle and Regalado shared the same campaign consultant, Armando Gutierrez. Gutierrez was a long-time campaign consultant for Rundle. Gutierrez was Regalado's campaign manager in his mayoral race.

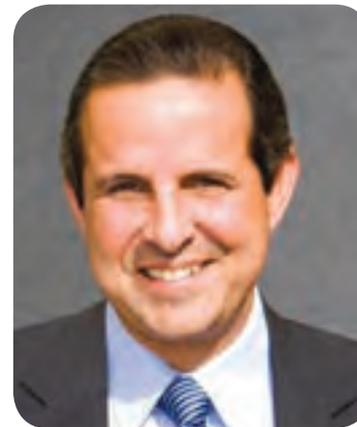
Rundle's close family friend, Ada Rojas, was also Regalado's Community Relations Coordinator.

On information and belief, Regalado attended a fundraiser for Rundle, and they have appeared together at press conferences and other functions in Miami.

On information and belief, Regalado has previously promoted Rundle on the radio. A popular mayor, Regalado was an important politician whose voters, constituency, and support were very useful to Rundle, herself an elected official.

Regalado and Rundle's special relationship has apparently progressed to the point of mutually beneficial, and highly questionable, quid-pro-quo arrangements. For example, Rundle has repeatedly refused to properly investigate allegations of criminality concerning Regalado.

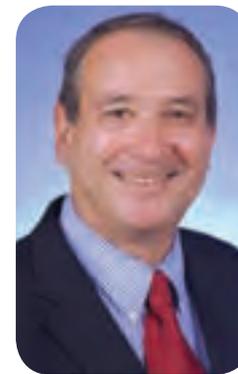
In October 1999, Rundle closed out an investigation into allegations of grand theft based on the alleged misuse of a gas credit card by then-Commissioner Regalado. The SAO admitted that there was evidence of



As mayor of Miami, Manny Diaz hired Michelle Spence-Jones as an assistant.



Armando Gutierrez: Political advisor to both Tomás Regalado and Katherine Fernandez Rundle.



Joseph Centorino, head of the Commission on Ethics, believed that Regalado violated campaign finance laws.

a "serious" issue concerning numerous charges to Regalado's city-issued gas credit card from outside Miami's borders, charges for which Regalado had no explanation, as well as a "discrepancy"

in the amount of gas purchases as compared to the miles driven.

Yet Rundle closed the investigation without charging Regalado. She justified some of the discrepancies as caused by Regalado's use of a gas-guzzling utility vehicle.

Regalado was only too happy to return the favor. For example, Regalado secretly pressed for a commission resolution to rename a 56-block road in the heart of Miami in Rundle's honor. In 2008, the Florida state legislature passed a bill renaming a portion of NW/SW 12th Avenue in Miami as "Katherine Fernandez Rundle Avenue."

The Miami City Commission was required to ratify the renaming before the Florida Department of Transportation could post the new street signs. The commission did not ratify the bill in 2008, 2009, or 2010.

After the issue lay fallow for three years, Rundle's office secretly asked Regalado to ensure that the commission ratify the bill. On January 18, 2011, Regalado secretly e-mailed the deputy city manager for the City of Miami to have the city commission pass a resolution naming the avenue after Rundle.

In his e-mail, Regalado pressed to "place [the Resolution] in the consent agenda for [the] next commission meeting." Per Regalado's demand, the item was placed on the March 10, 2011, city commission agenda.

When questioned by the *Miami Herald*, however, Regalado falsely denied having any role in the renaming of "Katherine Fernandez Rundle Avenue."

Ultimately, Regalado's role was revealed when the press obtained his January 18, 2011, e-mail.

On March 10, 2011, the commission voted 3-0 to approve the renaming of Katherine Fernandez Rundle Avenue. Rundle was not only living, but the chief prosecutor in the jurisdiction that included the mayor and the commission.

Just months after Regalado shepherded the renaming of "Katherine Fernandez Rundle Avenue," Regalado was once again in criminal jeopardy.

In September 2011, after an investigation into campaign finance violations by Mayor Regalado and Raquel Regalado, his daughter and campaign finance manager, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) issued a report detailing the findings from

Continued on page 26

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its investigation. The FDLE investigation revealed blatant and criminal campaign violations that included forging campaign finance reports.

A forensic auditor with the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) outlined six violations of Chapter 106, Florida Statutes, by Regalado and his daughter.

COE director Joseph Centorino (a former prosecutor at the SAO) and SAO Assistant State Attorney Howard Rosen both believed that Regalado had acted “in apparent willful disregard for the rule of law.”

Rundle had previously recused herself from investigations of other politicians with whom she was close, including then-Mayor Joe Carollo, former city manager Donald Warshaw, and then-city Commissioner Johnny Winton.

But Rundle did not recuse herself in the Regalado case.

To the contrary, Rundle assumed responsibility for the investigation of her friend, ally, and recent road-renaming benefactor.

Despite substantial evidence of Regalado’s criminal wrongdoing, and the opinions of the director of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and her own Assistant State Attorney, Rundle did not file charges against Regalado.

Instead, Mayor Regalado and Raquel Regalado “agreed to pay a fine that was agreed at \$5000 each for the violations enumerated,” as a civil penalty, without any criminal charge.

Rundle took no steps to force Regalado to resign.

In marked contrast, when Rundle believed that then-Miami-Dade County Commissioner Bruce Kaplan had violated financial disclosure rules, she extracted Kaplan’s resignation and a promise not to seek re-election as part of a plea bargain.

In short, even as Rundle concocted a false bribery charge against Spence-Jones related to a street naming [in downtown Miami], Rundle herself failed to pursue any criminal charges against the very mayor who had just helped rename an avenue after herself, notwithstanding his “apparent willful disregard for the rule of law.”

DEFENDANTS PREPARE THEIR SCHEME TO ARREST SPENCE-JONES AND KICK HER OFF THE COMMISSION

With this understanding of Regalado, Rundle, and Scruggs, we turn to the defendants’ scheme to remove Spence-Jones from the commission and eliminate her as an opponent of the mayor.

In the fall of 2009, then-Commissioner Regalado was running to be mayor of the City of Miami, and Spence-Jones was running for re-election as a District 5 commissioner, both elections to occur on November 3, 2009.

Regalado was not merely running for mayor. Aided by Rundle and the SAO, Regalado was also scheming to control the commission.

On multiple occa-



Commissioner Johnny Winton delayed a vote on extending Brickell Avenue’s name.

sions in the fall of 2009, during election season, the SAO’s office contacted the City of Miami Office of the City Attorney concerning numerous internal commission matters, including the procedure for filling a vacancy on the city commission under the Miami City Charter, how many commissioners would constitute a quorum sufficient to replace any commissioners that were suspended, and when an elected commissioner’s term of office officially begins.

The SAO had no legitimate reason to contact the Office of the City Attorney about any of these questions.

For example, in or about August/September 2009, SAO Chief Deputy José Arrojo contacted a high-level lawyer at the Office of the City Attorney to schedule a meeting.



Prosecutor Angelica Zayas asked the city attorney’s office about filling commission vacancies.



Governor Charlie Crist removed Commissioner Spence-Jones from office three times.

At the SAO, Arrojo was the Chief Assistant of Special Prosecutions, reporting directly to Rundle. Arrojo requested that the meeting be discreet and secret.

At the meeting, Arrojo asked pointed questions concerning the Miami City Charter’s provisions for filling a vacancy on the city commission, including the appointment process, special elections, and how many commissioners would constitute a quorum.

This meeting was unusual and unprecedented.

After the “discreet” Arrojo meeting,



Miami City Attorney Julie Bru allegedly refused an order from Mayor Regalado to bend the rules.



Commissioner Angel Gonzalez, forced to resign, was asked to return to city hall for a vote.

another SAO prosecutor, Angelica Zayas, an appellate attorney at the SAO, called a high-level lawyer at the Office of the City Attorney, again with questions concerning the Miami City Charter’s provisions for filling vacancies on the city commission. Specifically, Zayas was concerned about whether two commissioners could constitute a quorum sufficient to appoint other commissioners. On information and belief, Rundle directed

Arrojo and Zayas to make these inquiries.

In the weeks preceding the November 3, 2009, election, Rundle herself called the city attorney for the City of Miami, Julie Bru. Ms. Bru was the highest-ranking lawyer in the legal office for the City of Miami.

Rundle asked Bru exactly when a city commissioner takes office after an election pursuant to the Miami City Charter. (Under the charter, a commissioner takes office five days after the canvas of the ballots.)

Rundle had no legitimate reason to call Bru about any of these internal commission matters.

In these various conversations, the Office of the City Attorney informed Rundle and her team that, under the Miami City Charter, if a commissioner were suspended prior to the November 3, 2009, election, the suspension would only be in effect until the seat was filled in that election. In addition, if a commissioner were suspended in between the election and the swearing-in, the suspension would only be in effect for the few days until the swearing-in. However, if a commissioner were suspended after the swearing-in, the suspension would be in effect until the next general election, a year away.

For example, if Spence-Jones were elected on November 3, 2009, and took office on November 12, 2009, she would have to be suspended after taking office on November 12, 2009, in order for the suspension to be in effect for a year. If, however, she were suspended before November 12, the suspension would only last until November 12, at which point she would retake her suspended seat.

Rundle was keen to know exactly when Spence-Jones would take office. Rundle asked pointed questions as to the precise date after the election that a commissioner would officially take office.

While Rundle and her team were carefully preparing the timing for Spence-Jones’s arrest and suspension from the commission, Regalado was preparing for Spence-Jones’s arrest as well. For example, on information and belief in August 2009, long before Spence-Jones’s arrest, Regalado attended a meeting of the South Florida AFL-CIO in Miami. There, Regalado told the union members that Spence-Jones was “going to jail.”

Continued on page 28

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SPENCE-JONES IS ELECTED, SWORN-IN, AND PROMPTLY ARRESTED AND SUSPENDED

On November 3, 2009, Regalado was elected mayor of the City of Miami.

On November 3, 2009, elections for commissioner were held for Districts 3, 4, and 5 in the City of Miami. As of November 3, 2009, the state of the commission was as follows:

District 1: Angel Gonzalez, who represented District 1, remained a commissioner and was not up for re-election in November 2009. Gonzalez was a Regalado opponent.

District 2: Marc Sarnoff, who represented District 2, remained a commissioner and was not up for re-election in November 2009. Sarnoff was a Regalado ally.

District 3: On November 3, 2009, Frank Carollo was elected commissioner for District 3, which had been represented by Joe Sanchez.

District 4, which had been represented by Regalado, had no winner by majority vote. A run-off election between Francis Suarez and Manuel Reyes — who each received between 40% and 45% of the vote — was necessary.

District 5: On November 3, 2009, Spence-Jones was re-elected to a four-year term as commissioner for District 5, with an overwhelming 82.63% of the vote.

Thus, after the November 3, 2009, election, Spence-Jones and Gonzalez — both rivals of the mayor — were slated to fill two seats, Carollo was slated to fill the third, and Sarnoff, a Regalado ally, was slated to fill the fourth. The remaining seat, District 4, remained open, pending a run-off election.

Spence-Jones was due to be sworn into office on November 12, 2009.

Defendants, however, had other plans.

Regalado and Rundle, with the assistance of Scruggs and Fielder, conspired to arrest Spence-Jones in order to remove Regalado's political opponent from elected office. Regalado was a driving force behind the scheme to fabricate false charges to remove Spence-Jones from office and continue to pursue those charges even where there was no evidence supporting them.

The scheme involved not only the Carey-Shuler and Codina frauds, which are

extensively detailed, but has also included other baseless investigations of Spence-Jones by the SAO Defendants, over a period of a number of years, in a desperate attempt to produce any evidence which could lead to Spence-Jones's removal from office.

Days before an arrest warrant was even issued for Spence-Jones, Florida Gov. Charlie Crist knew that Spence-Jones was going to be charged and arrested.

On November 10, 2009, two days before Spence-Jones's swearing in, Governor Crist had in his files a document with a picture of Spence-Jones, listing three "felony" charges: "grand theft, organized scheme to defraud, money



Wifredo "Willy" Gort, a Regalado ally, replaced Angel Gonzalez on the city commission.

laundering."

But Spence-Jones had not been charged with any crime as of November 10, 2009.

Rundle's office had alerted Crist that Spence-Jones would be arrested.

Before the arrest, Rundle personally spoke with Governor Crist about removing Spence-Jones from the commission after her arrest.

Before the arrest, a high-level member of Crist's staff also contacted the Office of the City Attorney, to inquire precisely when an elected Miami City commissioner would officially take office.

REGALADO PREPARES FOR SPENCE-JONES'S ARREST, AND TRIES TO DESTROY A PHOTOGRAPH

Before he was sworn in on November 11, 2009, Regalado was also well aware, via secret communications with Rundle, the

SAO, and Crist, that Spence-Jones was going to be charged and arrested.

For example, after November 3, 2009, and, on information and belief, before November 12, 2009, Regalado's new spokesman, Pat Santangelo, was at the Miami television studios of Island TV. In a conversation there, Santangelo stated that Spence-Jones was going to go to jail on corruption charges.

On November 11, 2009, Regalado was



Veteran city clerk Priscilla Thompson refused to rush the certification of a run-off election.



Marc Sarnoff, a Regalado ally, was appointed commission chairman by the mayor.



Commissioner Frank Carollo was elected, sworn in, but couldn't form a quorum.



Francis Suarez was sworn in as commissioner, creating a quorum, but it was too late.

sworn in as mayor.

Governor Crist decided to attend Regalado's swearing-in ceremony at city hall. Shortly before the ceremony, Spence-Jones sought to meet Crist, whom she had never met, and have a photo together. Spence-Jones was brought to a room in city hall with Regalado and Crist. Regalado and Crist were quite uncomfortable during the brief meeting. As between Crist, Regalado, and Spence-Jones, Spence-Jones was the only person unaware that the SAO Defendants were about to arrest her.

An official photographer for the City of Miami took a picture of Spence-Jones, Regalado, and Crist.

After the photograph, Spence-Jones left to attend Regalado's swearing-in ceremony.

Regalado later told the city photographer to destroy that photograph.

In the entire career of the city photographer, no public official had ever told him to destroy a photograph.

Regalado's demand was a violation of the Florida Public Records Act. The photograph of these public officials was a public record that could not be destroyed under Florida law.

The photographer, however, disobeyed Regalado's request, and did not destroy the picture.

RUNDLE TIMES SPENCE-JONES'S ARREST RIGHT AFTER SHE IS SWORN-IN

Between Spence-Jones's election on November 3, and her planned swearing-in on November 12, Rundle was busy perfecting the scheme to arrest and remove Spence-Jones at just the right moment.

During this period, Rundle personally called Julie Bru, seeking to determine the precise date when Spence-Jones's old term (2005-2009) would end, and when her new term (2009-2013) would begin. Bru informed Rundle that Spence-Jones's new term would not begin until noon on the fifth day after the canvas of the ballots, which would be November 12.

That same day, just as planned, Rundle and the SAO filed an arrest affidavit and obtained an arrest warrant for Spence-Jones for grand theft, second degree, a felony.

Rundle forwarded Governor Crist the arrest affidavit by e-mail dated November 12, 2009.

On November 13, 2009, Spence-Jones turned herself in.

At the direction of the SAO Defendants, Spence-Jones was arrested, detained, booked, fingerprinted, and jailed in a holding cell.

Scruggs asked that corrections officers handcuff Spence-Jones while she was transported to the cell. Upon information and belief, Scruggs made that request in order to arrange a "perp walk" to further humiliate Spence-Jones.

An employee of the Miami-Dade Corrections Department rejected the request to handcuff Spence-Jones and rejected Scruggs's request to transport

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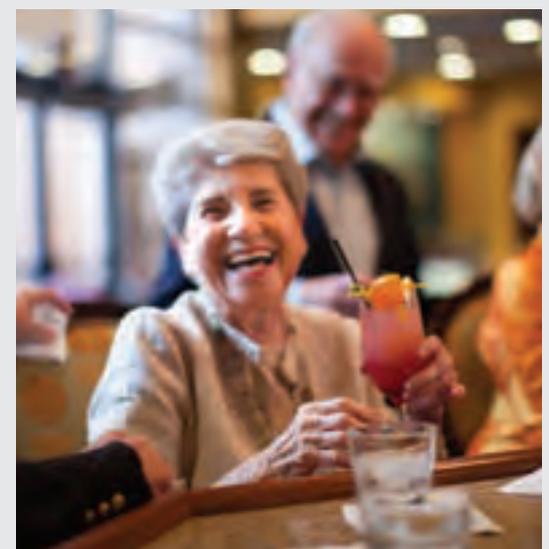
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Magic City Madhouse

Continued from page 28

Spence-Jones outside (i.e., a “perp walk”), saying it was not necessary.

RUNDLE DEFAMES SPENCE-JONES

On November 13, 2009, Rundle held a press conference. Earlier that day, the SAO issued a press release — which remains published on the SAO’s official website, available to anyone in Florida, the United States, or anywhere in the world with access to the Internet — announcing that press conference.

The press conference served no legitimate prosecutorial purpose. Rather, the SAO Defendants intended to and did unfairly and improperly defame Spence-Jones, tar her reputation in the community and in the court of public opinion, and attempt to taint the jury pool that would eventually hear the SAO’s fraudulent case.

During the November 13, 2009, press conference, Rundle stated that Spence-Jones is “being charged with theft relating to her acts of redirecting county money for her personal use prior to her becoming a city commissioner, while she was working as a public servant for the City of Miami.”

Spence-Jones never committed any “acts” of “redirecting county money for her personal use.” The statement was deliberately and maliciously false and defamatory.

During the press conference, Rundle also stated that Spence-Jones “was not entitled to spend \$50,000 that was supposed to go to two other entities for any other purpose.”

The statement was deliberately and maliciously false and defamatory.

Spence-Jones never spent money that was “supposed to go to two other entities”; the moneys in question were supposed to go to the entity that received those moneys: an entity called Karym.

On November 20, 2009, Rundle — both directly, and through her director of media relations — sent e-mails to the largest newspaper in Miami, the *Miami Herald*, accusing Spence-Jones of stealing money.

First, Rundle authorized and approved statements sent to *Miami Herald* reporters stating that, in contrast to Spence-Jones, Commissioner Angel Gonzalez “didn’t steal any money.”

Referring to Spence-Jones, Rundle also wrote: “Why do some public servants steal from the public?”

Later that morning, and apparently not content to defame Spence-Jones to two *Miami Herald* reporters, Rundle personally e-mailed the same accusations against Spence-Jones to the editor of the *Miami Herald* editorial page.

These were deliberately false and malicious statements. Spence-Jones did not steal any money or steal from the public.

CRIST SUSPENDS SPENCE-JONES (SUSPENSION #1)

On November 13, 2009, just one day after Spence-Jones’s swearing-in, Gover-



Richard Dunn lost a 2005 election to Spence-Jones, then was appointed to replace her.



Judge Victoria Platzer warned that Governor Crist may have illegally suspended Spence-Jones.

nor Crist issued Executive Order 09-248, immediately suspending Spence-Jones from her commission seat and depriving District 5 voters of their elected commissioner. The executive order cited, relied upon, and attached a deliberately false November 12, 2009, arrest affidavit of defendant Robert Fielder, an SAO employee and investigator.

Crist issued the executive order suspending Spence-Jones even before an



Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Barbara Carey-Shuler said she was “tricked” by prosecutor Richard Scruggs.



Developer Armando Codina says prosecutor Richard Scruggs told him that Spence-Jones had pocketed his charitable donation.

Information or any charging document had been filed against her.

On November 13, 2009, prior to the issuance of the executive order, Governor Crist’s deputy general counsel requested a copy of the nonexistent charging document. Although there was no Information or Indictment, and no formal criminal charge had been filed against Spence-Jones, Crist suspended Spence-Jones anyway.

The rush to suspend Spence-Jones was irregular at best. For example, when Cape Coral Commissioner Eric Grill was arrested for three felonies on December 12, 2009, Crist told an assistant city attorney that he would not even consider issuing an



Defense attorney Peter Raben discovered the Carey-Shuler letter that exonerated his client, Spence-Jones.



Miami Police Chief Miguel Exposito on Fernandez Rundle: “I think she needs to go.”

executive order suspending him until the State Attorney filed formal charges. Grill was only suspended on February 24, 2010, after a formal Information was filed.

RUNDLE AND REGALADO ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

As set forth below, Spence-Jones’s arrest warrant was based on a November 12, 2009, affidavit of defendant Robert Fielder,

an SAO employee and investigator.

The Fielder affidavit, in turn, was allegedly based on a September 18, 2009, subpoenaed sworn statement by Barbara Carey-Shuler, the product of Fielder and Scruggs’s conspiracy to withhold and fabricate evidence.

Rundle and her co-conspirators, however, waited almost two months after the Carey-Shuler statement to arrest Spence-Jones.

The timing of Spence-Jones’s arrest — immediately after she was sworn in as commissioner — was no accident. It was part of defendants’ conspiracy to manipulate the commission for political reasons.

Prosecutors told the media that the SAO purposefully waited until after Spence-Jones was elected to arrest Spence-Jones.

Defendants’ plan was (i) to remove Spence-Jones from the commission; (ii) to remove Spence-Jones’s ally and another Regalado opponent, Commissioner Angel Gonzalez, from the commission; (iii) the remaining commissioners aligned with Regalado would appoint Richard Dunn, a Regalado ally, as commissioner to fill Spence-Jones’s seat; and (iv) Regalado-allied commissioners would appoint Wifredo Gort as commissioner to fill Angel Gonzalez’s seat.

This would leave Regalado in total control of the commission, with Sarnoff (the chair appointed by Regalado), Dunn, and Gort reflecting three controlling votes of the five-member body.

A SNAG: NO QUORUM TO REPLACE SPENCE-JONES; A TEN-DAY DEADLINE EXPIRES

Defendants’ nefarious scheme almost worked.

As noted, on November 12, the SAO Defendants arrested Spence-Jones after she was sworn in, and on November 13, Crist suspended her.

Also on November 13, Rundle announced the charges against Commissioner Gonzalez. As part of the express terms of a plea deal with the SAO, Commissioner Gonzalez (i) resigned from office, effective November 16; (ii) agreed not to be a candidate in any special election to fill his own vacant seat; and (iii) agreed not to be a candidate for any county, state, or municipal office “through the close of the year 2010.”

Continued on page 32

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Thus, as of November 13, 2009, defendants successfully removed both Spence-Jones and Gonzalez from office, leaving Commissioners Frank Carollo and Marc Sarnoff.

Defendants' plan, however, hit a snag. At the time of Spence-Jones's removal and Gonzalez's forced resignation, District 4 remained open, because of the pending runoff election between Francis Suarez and candidate Manuel Reyes.

Thus, as of November 13, instead of three sitting commissioners on the commission, there were only two.

Absent a quorum of three, the commission could not vote at all, much less appoint Regalado's allies to replace Spence-Jones and Gonzalez.

In addition, under the Miami Charter, the commission had only ten days from Spence-Jones's removal, until November 23, 2009, to appoint a replacement for Spence-Jones. If the ten days lapsed, the people of District 5 would have another opportunity to vote in a special election for District 5 commissioner.

Even worse from defendants' perspective, the people of District 5 would have another opportunity to vote for Spence-Jones.

This political development — the lack of a quorum on the commission due to the run-off in District 4 — was of great concern to Rundle and her co-conspirators.

Far from being a disinterested prosecutor, Rundle sought to intervene to fill the empty commission seats.

RUNDLE TRIES TO MANIPULATE THE COMMISSION

Rundle once again called the city attorney for the City of Miami, Julie Bru. Rundle had no legitimate reason to call Ms. Bru.

Rundle asked Bru to contact Gonzalez and ask him to return temporarily to the commission on Saturday November 14, 2009, before the effective date of his resignation.

Rundle wanted Gonzalez to return temporarily in order to create a three-commissioner quorum, so that the commission could appoint Regalado's hand-picked successor to Spence-Jones.

Gonzalez refused.

Rundle had no legitimate reason to attempt to influence Ms. Bru on a commission matter, to create a quorum on the commission, or to help Regalado pick his ally to fill Spence-Jones's seat.

REGALADO TRIES TO MANIPULATE THE COMMISSION

Having failed to manipulate Gonzalez to return to the commission despite the plea deal Rundle orchestrated, and having failed to manipulate the composition of the commission to favor her co-conspirator Regalado, Rundle and Regalado took a second tack as part of their continuing conspiracy to control the city commission.

Regalado summoned Bru to a secret meeting at city hall on the weekend of November 14-15, 2009.

Such a meeting was unprecedented.

At the meeting were Regalado, Bru, and a city commissioner.

At the meeting, Regalado pressured Bru to disregard the Miami Charter and opine that the commission, even absent a quorum, could appoint a commissioner to fill Spence-Jones's seat.

Bru refused.

On November 16, 2009, Bru opined that the commission could not appoint Spence-Jones's replacement because two commissioners are not a quorum.

On November 17, 2009, Francis Suarez, an ally of Regalado, won the run-off election for commissioner for District 4.

According to published reports, Regalado then allegedly pressured Miami city clerk Priscilla Thompson to expedite the certification results of the Suarez/Reyes run-off so the winner could be sworn in immediately, creating a three-member quorum to appoint Spence-Jones's replacement before the ten-day deadline, on November 23. Thompson refused.

According to published reports, Regalado then pressured Bru again, this time to opine that Governor Crist could appoint Spence-Jones's replacement on the city commission. According to published reports, Bru acquiesced this time, but Crist did not appoint a replacement.

On November 25, 2009, Suarez was sworn in.

As of November 25, the commission finally had a quorum: Suarez, Sarnoff, and Carollo.

But it was too late. The ten-day period under the Miami Charter to appoint Spence-Jones's replacement lapsed on November 23, 2009. The commission was forced to call a special election to fill Spence-Jones's seat.

On November 25, 2009, the commission scheduled District 5's special election for January 12, 2010.

On November 25, 2009, the commission also voted to schedule a special election to fill Gonzalez's District 1 seat. Apparently Regalado's plan to appoint Gonzalez's replacement also failed, because a member of the commission publicly admitted to discussing the replacement with other commissioners in private, violating Florida's sunshine law and tainting any potential attempt by the commission to appoint Gonzalez's replacement.

On November 25, 2009, Regalado appointed his ally, Commissioner Sarnoff, to be chair of the commission. By tradition,



Mayor Tomás Regalado is being challenged by Commissioner Francis Suarez in this November's election.

as the ranking member of the commission, but for her arrest and suspension, Spence-Jones should have been appointed as chair.

THE CAREY-SHULER CHARGE: BASELESS AND BASED ON FABRICATED EVIDENCE

In September 2004, Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler was chairperson of the 13-member Miami-Dade County Commission, which reviews development plans, regulates transportation services and systems, enforces building codes and zoning laws, and manages public health facilities, housing programs and cultural affairs for the unincorporated areas of Miami-Dade County. In effect, she was in charge of a multibillion dollar County budget. One of the county commission's responsibilities was also to fund and recommend budget allocations for the Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust (MMAP), an urban development agency with its own board.

Carey-Shuler and her office received numerous, perhaps hundreds, of budget requests. One proposal came from Karym Ventures, Inc., a private company founded by Spence-Jones's family, for a neighborhood revitalization project called Café Soul. (Spence-Jones had not yet run for

city commissioner.) Café Soul was an urban development program to stimulate the economy in the predominately African-American Liberty City area of Miami. It involved redevelopment of a crack house and had several components: a themed restaurant focusing on Southern cuisine, an art gallery, a hair salon, and an entertainment space.

Carey-Shuler knew Spence-Jones personally and had confidence that Spence-Jones would make Café Soul a success.

On September 23, 2004, Carey-Shuler recommended that MMAP provide funding for Café Soul. As part of a long county commission session involving dozens of budget allocations, the commission, at least according to some MMAP staff, apparently recommended, mistakenly, that the funds be directed to two entities partnering with Karym on the project: Timbuktu Marketplace and Osun Village.

After Spence-Jones informed Carey-Shuler of the mistake, Carey-Shuler took steps to direct the \$50,000 to Karym, the entity meant to oversee the development of the Café Soul project.

On February 15, 2005, Carey-Shuler directed the final version of [a] letter [she had edited by hand] to be signed and sent to MMAP, and directed MMAP to provide the \$50,000 to Karym.

On February 16, 2005, MMAP's independent board voted 10-1 to spend \$50,000 in MMAP funds to Karym. Karym used that money to develop Café Soul.

The SAO Defendants... had both Carey-Shuler's final signed letter and her two drafts with extensive handwritten edits prior to taking a sworn statement of Carey-Shuler on September 18, 2009.

Not to be deterred by the truth, the SAO Defendants... perpetrated an outlandish and false story in which Carey-Shuler directed funds to Timbuktu Marketplace and Osun Village, Spence-Jones forged Carey-Shuler's signature, and secretly redirected funds to Karym, and then Spence-Jones stole the money.

On September 10, 2009, Scruggs and Fielder met with Carey-Shuler and her attorney. First, Scruggs threatened Carey-Shuler. Scruggs accused Carey-Shuler of receiving cash payments in return for her support for development deals on the county commission. This was no idle threat, as Scruggs and the SAO already had a history of targeting

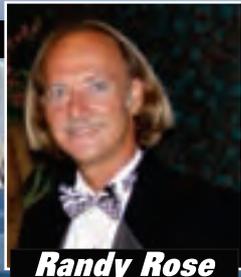
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Carey-Shuler for prosecution.

Having accused Carey-Shuler of receiving bribes and being a criminal, Scruggs then outright lied to Carey-Shuler. Scruggs falsely and maliciously told Carey-Shuler that Spence-Jones had... had simply stolen the county/MMAP money meant for the Café Soul project.

In questioning Carey-Shuler, it became clear that Carey-Shuler had forgotten about her decisions [more than four years earlier] about the Café Soul funding, including her decision to direct the \$50,000 to Karym.

By threatening, lying to, and misleading the chief prosecution witness, and withholding the key pieces of exculpatory evidence, the SAO Defendants induced Carey-Shuler to make a sworn statement on September 18, 2009, falsely implicating Spence-Jones in a scheme to take County money improperly, without her authorization. In a further effort to hide and advance this corrupt scheme, Scruggs also instructed Carey-Shuler to keep quiet about their meeting.

RABEN DEPOSES CAREY-SHULER; CAREY-SHULER LEARNS SHE WAS DECEIVED; THE SAO DEFENDANTS CONTINUE TO PURSUE THE FRAUDULENT CASE

Notwithstanding Scruggs's insistence and representation that the nine boxes he produced to Spence-Jones included all Carey-Shuler files relevant to the Shuler case, Raben demanded access to all Carey-Shuler files in the SAO's possession, including 43 boxes the SAO Defendants previously withheld.

Raben, Spence-Jones, and noted members of the community went to the county warehouse to review the remainder of the Carey-Shuler boxes. As requested by the county, the door to the room in which Raben and others viewed the file was kept open, so the review was visible to county staff.

Within less than 20 minutes after reviewing the boxes never produced by Scruggs, Raben and Spence-Jones found a folder clearly labeled "Café Soul." In the Café Soul file were, among other

documents, the two drafts of the February 15, 2005, letter, replete with Carey-Shuler's handwritten edits to the letter authorizing payment of \$50,000 to Karym.

On June 21, 2010, Raben deposed Carey-Shuler. During her deposition, Raben showed Carey-Shuler the drafts of her February 15 letter to MMAP that Scruggs and Fielder had withheld from Carey-Shuler.

Carey-Shuler immediately realized that the handwriting was hers and that she did instruct that MMAP provide funding to Karym.

When Carey-Shuler was shown the drafts of her letter, she realized that Scruggs had defrauded her: "He

tricked me," she said.

After the documents were finally revealed and the defendants' Carey-Shuler-related fraud was exposed, Rundle, Scruggs, and the SAO Defendants attempted to cover up their own fraud by claiming, falsely and maliciously, that Spence-Jones and her counsel fabricated, forged, and planted these two exonerative documents in the county file.

SPENCE-JONES IS RE-ELECTED; CRIST SUSPENDS HER AGAIN (SUSPENSION #2)

As noted above, because the ten-day period to appoint Spence-Jones's replacement lapsed on November 23, 2009, the commission was forced to call a special election to fill Spence-Jones's seat.

The commission scheduled a special election for January 12, 2010, to fill both the temporary vacancy created by Spence-Jones's suspension and the permanent vacancy created by Gonzalez's resignation.

To defendants' horror, and notwithstanding her arrest, Spence-Jones ran again for office to refill her own seat.

On December 19, 2009, Governor Crist threatened that, if Spence-Jones won the special election, he would disregard the will of the voters again, suspend Spence-Jones again, and require yet another

special election.

In anticipation of the special election, on January 4, 2010, Spence-Jones filed suit against Governor Crist in the circuit court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in Dade County, Florida ("the ACLU case").

The ACLU case sought to enjoin Crist from suspending Spence-Jones for the second time if she were re-elected on January 12.

On January 12, 2010, Spence-Jones indeed won the special election for District 5. Spence-Jones won by a 53% majority vote in a race with nine candidates.

On January 12, 2010, Regalado's ally, Wifredo Gort, won the special election for Angel Gonzalez's seat, in District 1.

On January 14, 2010, two days after Spence-Jones won the special election, Crist issued Executive Order 10-05, suspending Spence-Jones upon her assumption of office for the second time.

The executive order was effective upon Spence-Jones's assumption of office.

Spence-Jones was to hold office beginning January 16, 2010, after the city clerk completed the vote canvas and transmitted the official results.

Thus, Spence-Jones was suspended, for the second time, effective January 16, 2010.

A SECOND RACE AGAINST TIME; DISTRICT 5 LOSES ITS VOTE AGAIN; "MAGIC CITY" FOR REGALADO

Once again, defendants faced a ten-day deadline under the city charter — until January 26, 2010 — for the commission to appoint Spence-Jones's replacement, or face another special election in District 5 (which Spence-Jones almost undoubtedly would have won).

This time, however, defendants had a quorum in the commission, of four votes.

On January 19, 2010, Gort was sworn in as a commissioner.

On January 26, 2010, the commission held a "Special Meeting" attended by Commissioners Sarnoff, Carollo, Gort, and Suarez, and by Mayor Regalado.

This was the tenth day after Spence-Jones's suspension. To prevent District 5 from voting in another special election, the commission had to appoint Spence-Jones's replacement no later than midnight.

Regalado was extremely eager to get the appointment done by midnight, avoid an election, and prevent Spence-Jones from returning to the commission.

Regalado began by addressing the commission: "[T]he only thing that I'm asking you guys is to do everything before midnight, because as you know, today is the

deadline for the appointment of the person."

Regalado continued: "It's been too long without anyone representing the district, so hopefully, today we will do the right thing for the people of District 5... We'll be here listening and participating and hoping that we can have resolution before midnight, because if not, we have to go to the other process that the city charter calls for."

The "other process" is an election, by voters of District 5, for their commissioner.

The "other process," voting, had led to Spence-Jones's election twice, in November 2009, and in January 2010.

After a discussion among the commissioners as to the propriety of appointing a commissioner instead of permitting voters to choose their own commissioner, the commission entertained applications from various candidates, then comments from the public concerning who should replace Spence-Jones.

Instead, in an outpouring of support for Spence-Jones, many citizens implored the commission to respect the will of the voters, and decried the entire appointment process.

The commission then voted, ultimately appointing Richard Dunn to replace Spence-Jones.

Regalado, apparently fulfilling his promise to "be here listening and participating and hoping that we can have resolution before midnight," could not contain his euphoria.

Following the appointment, Regalado again addressed the commission that night. This time, he sat behind the dais of the commission, as if he were a commissioner. In fact, Regalado sat in Spence-Jones's own seat.

Having engineered Spence-Jones's removal and replacement with his own commissioner, and now literally occupying Spence-Jones's own chair, Regalado told the commission: "I am so proud of you... You understand the right thing to do. You understand deadlines."

Regalado then noted that he himself had previously nominated Commissioner Dunn.

Regalado then stated, addressing Dunn: "[N]ow with your leadership, we will be able to move forward and you'll be part of the hard decisions, and hopefully, those hard decisions will be 5 to 0. We have come into the era of 5-0 and not 3-2 or 4-1 in the City of Miami commission. It's working together for the Magic City. Thank you, guys. Thank you, Richard. Thank you very much. Thank you, you all, for being here."



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Continued from page 34

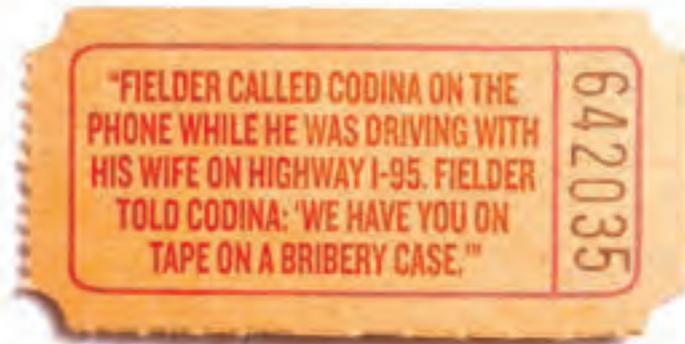
The commission adjourned at 11:18 p.m., 42 minutes before Regalado's "deadline," 42 minutes before the voters of District 5 would have had the right to elect their own commissioner.

Regalado's victory was complete. Through the dogged intervention of the SAO Defendants, the fraudulent investigation, arrest, detention, imprisonment, and Information, Regalado had finally swept Spence-Jones off the commission once and for all. Or so defendants thought.

SPENCE-JONES AND HER CONSTITUENTS SUE TO REGAIN THE COMMISSION SEAT

On January 26, 2010, Spence-Jones filed a five-count amended complaint, alleging that Crist's second suspension violated the Florida Constitution. The American Civil Liberties Union

intervened in the Spence-Jones case, seeking a permanent injunction against Spence-Jones's suspension. The ACLU was joined by five City of Miami District 5 voters who voted for Spence-Jones in the January 12, 2010, special election, as



intervener-plaintiffs.

On February 26, 2010, Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Victoria Platzer held a conference. At the conference, Judge Platzer delivered shocking news to defendants: They would almost surely lose the ACLU case, and Spence-Jones would have to be reinstated to the commission.

Judge Platzer stated: "I don't believe the governor is permitted...to have

suspended [Spence-Jones,] because I believe that the provision requires an Indictment... [A]n Indictment is different than an Information, and she was not charged. She was charged by Information and she was not indicted, or an Indictment was not returned against her."

Judge Platzer stated she would rule "within...ten days. And if I can do it sooner, I will."

A THIRD RACE AGAINST TIME; THE SAO INDICTS; CRIST SUSPENDS SPENCE-JONES AGAIN (SUSPENSION #3)

Suddenly, defendants were faced, again, with a race against time. Notwithstanding their repeated, fraudulent manipulation of the political process, defendants faced the prospect of Spence-Jones's imminent return to the commission.

As a result, defendants conspired, yet again, to trump up fraudulent charges against Spence-Jones.

Defendants' first plan was to sidestep Judge Platzer's imminent ruling by charging Spence-Jones by Indictment instead of Information.

The SAO Defendants did not even hide the true goal and intent of the Indictment: to keep Spence-Jones off the commission. For example, SAO prosecutor Joseph Centorino, chief of the SAO's public corruption unit, told an attorney for Spence-Jones that the ACLU lawsuit served no purpose, stating in sum and substance: "It's a waste of time, all we have to do is indict."

Scruggs flatly told a prosecution witness that the SAO would indict Spence-Jones to keep her off the commission.

Given that there was already an Information, indicting Spence-Jones served no prosecutorial purpose; it did not advance the criminal case.

The sole purpose of the Indictment was to aid Regalado by ensuring that his political opponent remained off the Miami City Commission.

There was nothing legitimate about the SAO's Indictment: it was a naked, overt, and blatant attempt to manipulate the political process in the City of Miami.

Indicting Spence-Jones on a mere grand theft charge was also highly unusual.

Continued on page 38

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Asked about the purpose of indicting Spence-Jones, Rundle stated publicly: "It just seemed logical to go ahead and get an Indictment by a grand jury." The only "logical" reason, however, was to keep Spence-Jones off the commission.

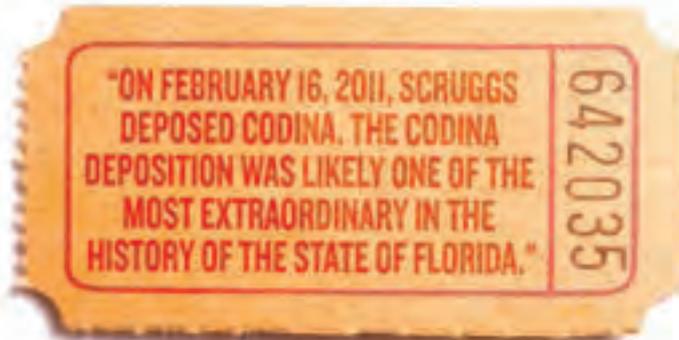
On March 3, 2010, at the SAO's request, a grand jury returned an Indictment [against Spence-Jones] in the Carey-Shuler case, for grand theft, conveniently replacing the November 2, 2009, Information. The Indictment was based on the same fraud and improper withholding of evidence as the arrest affidavit and the Information.

This Indictment was a mere five days after Judge Platzer presaged that Spence-Jones would be permitted to return to the commission absent an Indictment, and five days before Judge Platzer's end date for a formal ruling.

The day after the Indictment, Crist issued a third executive order concerning

Spence-Jones. Executive Order 10-61, filed March 4, 2010, purported to "amend" Executive Order 10-05 to "reflect that the suspension of Michelle Spence-Jones...is further supported" by the Indictment.

In subsequent briefing in the ACLU case, Crist's counsel argued that the Indictment rendered the



ACLU case "moot." The governor argued that "the voters [in the January 2010 special election] could not have reviewed [Spence-Jones's] suspension due to the Indictment where [Spence-Jones] had previously been charged by Information."

Defendants' scheme succeeded. On April 5, 2010, in light of the intervening Indictment, Judge Platzer dismissed the ACLU case as moot, and did not reinstate Spence-Jones to the commission.

Defendants finally appeared to have achieved their goal: removing Spence-Jones from the commission, permanently.

THE CODINA CASE: ANOTHER CASE, ANOTHER FRAUD

Realizing, however, that the Carey-Shuler case was based on their own deliberate fraud, the SAO Defendants this time sought an insurance policy, bringing an entirely separate Indictment against Spence-Jones on March 3, 2010 ("the Codina case").

The very day that Spence-Jones won the special election, January 12, 2010, the SAO Defendants met with Armando Codina to concoct a separate baseless claim against Spence-Jones.

Just as in the Carey-Shuler case, Rundle, Scruggs, and Fielder knew that there was no probable cause to charge Spence-Jones in the Codina case.

Like the Carey-Shuler case, however, the Codina case was from the beginning based on a deliberate fraud and series of fabrications and attempts to manufacture nonexistent probable cause by the SAO Defendants.

THE RENAMING OF SOUTHEAST SECOND AVENUE

The Codina case allegedly stemmed from events that occurred in the spring of 2006. Armando Codina is a prominent developer in Miami and a generous philanthropist.

In March 2006, the developers of an office and hotel complex in downtown Miami sought a change to the name of the street address for their proposed complex to aid in marketing. They sought to change the name from "Southeast Second Avenue" to Brickell Avenue. On information and belief, Codina did not own any property on the street whose name might be changed.

Continued on page 40

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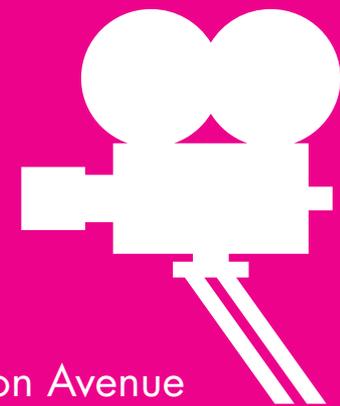
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Continued from page 38

On March 23, 2006, the Miami City Commission met about a number of matters, including the name change. The street was in Commissioner Johnny Winton's district.

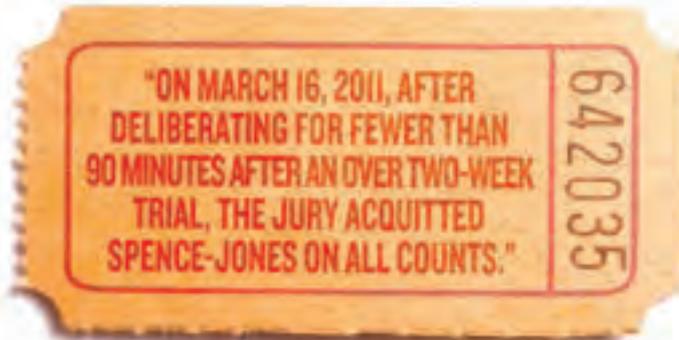
Accordingly, Commissioner Winton was seen as the key vote on this proposal. On a vote that had little citywide impact, such as this one, the other commissioners generally deferred to the view of commissioner whose district was directly affected, and almost always voted unanimously.

On this trivial issue of no relevance to her district and minimal relevance to the city, Spence-Jones intended to defer to Commissioner Winton's view of the Brickell Avenue proposal.

At the March 23, 2006 commission meeting, Spence-Jones told Commissioner Winton on the record that she "concur[red] with" him and "would definitely...defer to you [Winton] on this item [the street renaming]."

Because Commissioner Winton was not prepared to vote on the Brickell Avenue proposal on March 23, it was postponed to a future meeting and the commissioners did not vote on the matter.

On March 29, 2006, city attorney Rafael Rivas-Suarez opined that the city commission did not even have jurisdiction to change the name of a state road. The



commission never voted on the street-naming issue.

Months before March 2006, the City of Miami had planned a benefit in the Lyric Theater in honor of Barbara Carey-Shuler, who had retired from the Miami-Dade County Commission. The event was

scheduled for April 3, 2006. Two commissioners — city Commissioner Spence-Jones and county Commissioner Audrey Edmonson — were tasked to host the event in her honor, and to benefit a charity called the Friends of MLK. Friends of MLK was a charity whose mission was to advance the vision and goals of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a co-sponsor of the event.

Spence-Jones's office undertook the fundraising for this official City of Miami benefit. Her staff invited dozens of people to the benefit, including prominent philanthropists, community leaders, and business persons.

Codina had previously donated moneys to a charity that Spence-Jones was involved in, and he was known as a businessperson who prided himself in giving back to the community.

Codina had also been dear friends with Carey-Shuler's late-husband, and knew Carey-Shuler for some 15 to 20 years.

Codina was also on the board of Burger King, one of the principal sponsors of the benefit.

An assistant in Spence-Jones's office contacted a number of people, including Codina, to see whether they would consider contributing to the Friends of MLK charity. At Codina's request, Spence-Jones's office followed up with an explanatory, March 30, 2006, e-mail describing the charity and the event. The subject of the e-mail was "Reclaim & Build the Dream Reception Honoring Dr. Barbara Carey-Shule[r]." The e-mail stated: "Thanks again for your time and support of the MLK Trust Fund," noted the involvement of the Dade Community Foundation, and referred to a "special reception, to our hometown hero Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, for her humanitarian efforts in promoting the dreams of Dr. King as well as addressing the needs of the residents of our great city[.]"

During this brief charitable solicitation, the assistant never mentioned the trivial street matter pending before the commission. The follow-up e-mail also made no mention of the matter. The assistant never promised or even implied any "tit for tat" based on Codina's contribution to the charity. Codina did not speak to Spence-Jones

Continued on page 42

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Continued from page 40

prior to making the donation.

The assistant also explained that Friends of MLK was not yet incorporated, and that the charitable donation would be deposited at the Dade Community Foundation, the leading fiscal sponsor for unincorporated nonprofits in the Miami-Dade area. The Dade Community Foundation supports budding nonprofits in registering with the IRS and complying with its regulations.

Spence-Jones's office also informed Codina that Burger King was sponsoring the event.

Codina donated \$12,500 to the Friends of MLK Trust Fund.

Codina made the charitable contribution because of his dear friendship with Carey-Shuler's late husband, because Burger King was a sponsor of the event (and Codina was on Burger King's board), because he was a prominent philanthropist, because it was a charitable cause, and because the money would be deposited with and administered by the Dade Community Foundation, one of the most reputable organizations in Miami.

On April 3, 2006, the Friends of MLK organization held the City of Miami charity function in honor of Carey-Shuler at the Lyric Theater. It was an enormous success.

Checks for the charity, including Codina's check, were deposited with the Dade Community Foundation.

There was nothing secret about the Codina Group's charitable contribution: the Codina Group, Burger King, and others were publicly recognized as sponsors at the benefit.

The SAO Defendants, however, saw in this publicly recognized charitable contribution by a prominent philanthropist and friend of the honoree an opportunity to concoct yet another fraudulent investigation and charge against Spence-Jones.

THE SAO DEFENDANTS INTIMIDATE AND FALSELY ACCUSE CODINA

This time, the SAO Defendants fabricated evidence in an effort to claim that the \$12,500 Codina donated to a charity was actually a bribe to influence

Spence-Jones's nonexistent vote to change the name of a street in someone else's district.

On or about January 6, 2010, Fielder called Codina on the phone while he was driving with his wife on highway I-95.

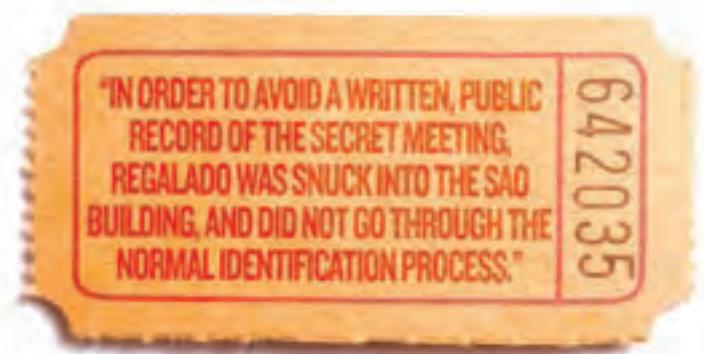
This was just six days before Spence-Jones's special election to the seat she had lost as a result of the SAO's arrest.

Fielder told Codina: "We have you on tape on a bribery case."

That was a deliberate and malicious falsehood, intended to intimidate and manipulate Codina in order to persuade him to implicate Spence-Jones in a crime.

The SAO did not have any evidence of Codina being involved in a bribe, on tape or otherwise.

In that phone call, Fielder also told



Codina that Codina had made donations to a "fund controlled by Michelle Spence-Jones."

That was a deliberate and malicious falsehood: Spence-Jones did not control any fund to which Codina donated.

Codina said that he "better get a lawyer," and Fielder agreed, stating, "We've got an issue here."

Knowing there was no bribe, no wrongdoing, and not even a commission vote, Scruggs and Fielder concocted an alternate reality in order to induce Codina to implicate Spence-Jones in a crime.

Just as they had in the Carey-Shuler case, the SAO Defendants lied to, manipulated, and withheld evidence from the chief prosecution witness, this time Codina, in an effort to manufacture probable cause to arrest and then charge Spence-Jones.

On February 16, 2011, Scruggs deposed Codina.

The Codina deposition was likely one of the most extraordinary in the history of the State of Florida.

Codina testified that, before meeting Scruggs in January 2010, he believed he had "given a charitable

Continued on page 44

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contribution for funds to be spent by the Dade Community Foundation at an event...in honor of Barbara Carey-Shuler.”

When Codina met with Scruggs, however, Scruggs told him “there had not been an event.”

As Codina said to Scruggs during Codina’s sworn deposition: “You told me that there had not been an event. You told me that the charity was a fake and that she had used the money as her own piggybank, so I was distraught when I was here. I was convinced that the flier had been a fake, that no event had taken place and that she had pocketed the money.”

Codina explained, however, that he had since learned that Scruggs had deceived him: “Since that time, I know that there was an event. There was an event that was well attended.... It was an event where we were recognized.... I found out that my check was deposited at the Dade Community Foundation, so if I had known those facts when I was here, I wouldn’t have expressed some of the emotions that I expressed at the time.”

Rather than ask questions, as lawyers usually do at depositions, Scruggs essentially testified on the record, in his

own defense. Scruggs admitted that he knew, when he met Codina in January 2010, that there had been a charitable event. Scruggs also admitted that he knew, when he met Codina, that Codina’s check had been deposited at the Dade Community Foundation.

During Codina’s deposition, Scruggs claimed that Codina’s clear recollection of their meeting was a simple “misunderstanding.”

Codina insisted that there was no misunderstanding: “Mr. Scruggs, you unequivocally told me there had not been an event and that [Spence-Jones] had used the money as a piggybank.”

THE TRIAL: CODINA CASE IS EXPOSED TO THE WORLD AS A FRAUD

The Codina case [against Spence-Jones]...lasted from February 28, 2011, to March 16, 2011.

In the middle of the trial, on March 10, 2011, the commission voted 3-0 to approve the naming of “Katherine Fernandez Rundle Avenue.”

The SAO Defendants knew the Codina case was hopeless. As one assistant state attorney wrote in an internal e-mail: “If we win this case, it will be a miracle of God.”

During the criminal trial, Codina again testified about Scruggs’s deceit.

Codina testified that Scruggs told him “in no uncertain terms...that no event had taken place at the Lyric Theater, that the charity was a sham, and that Michelle Spence-Jones had used the money as her own piggy bank.”

Codina explained that he “believed Mr. Scruggs” and was “convinced that there had not been an event, that the charity was a fake, and my money had been pocketed by Michelle Spence-Jones.”

As a result of the SAO Defendants’ lies, Codina was “ashamed [and] thought Ms. Spence-Jones had duped [him].” He felt “intimidated” by the SAO, because “knowing all of that — that I gave the

check anyway.”

Codina testified, however, that he ultimately found out that there was a well-attended event at which he was recognized and two of his executives attended. Codina further learned that his check was

deposited with the Dade Community Foundation.

Codina later told reporters that Scruggs had “purposely misled” him.

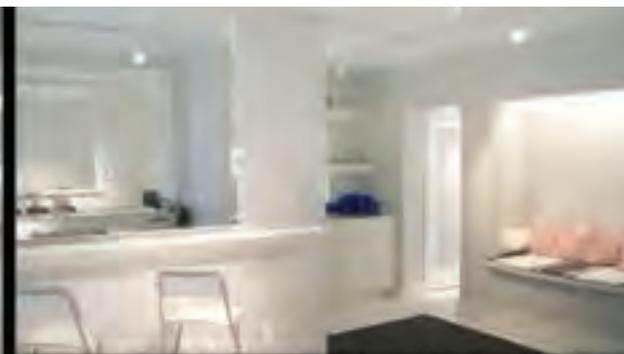
Codina also testified, at this supposed trial about bribery and grand theft, that there was no bribe and no theft. Codina testified that “it was not a ‘tit for tat.’ If I thought for a second it had been, I would not have given the check.”

On March 16, 2011, after deliberating for fewer than 90 minutes after an over two-week trial, the jury acquitted Spence-Jones on all counts.

Continued on page 46



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SCRUGGS'S PERSONAL VENDETTA AGAINST RABEN; RUNDLE: "BOYS WILL BE BOYS"

Scruggs admitted that his baseless pursuit of Spence-Jones was also based, in part, on a personal vendetta against Spence-Jones's criminal counsel, Peter Raben.

Fielder's deposition was scheduled for May 27, 2010. When Raben sought to confirm the deposition time, Scruggs did not respond. In a May 27 telephone call, Raben asked Scruggs why he had not responded. Scruggs said: "I don't have to fucking call you."

Raben queried him on his lack of professionalism.

Scruggs said: "You made a false accusation against me that caused me a lot of grief in the community." He further stated: "And until I do that to you, and we are even, then I will continue to have a problem with you."

On the record at the deposition that day, Raben stated that he did not want to begin Fielder's deposition before resolving whether Scruggs would continue to remain on the case, given his statement that he wanted to "get even" with defense counsel.

Scruggs responded to Raben on the record: "What, are you upset? Did I hurt your feelings? Do you want to call my mother?"

Later that day, Raben wrote to Rundle and relayed Scruggs's unprofessional and irresponsible statements. Raben wrote: "This prosecutor has expressed a vendetta against me. It is an embarrassment and disgrace that he should be allowed to remain in this position." Raben asked that Scruggs be removed from the case.

Rundle refused to remove Scruggs from the case. Instead, Rundle told Raben in a subsequent phone call: "Boys will be boys."

REGALADO-RUNDLE'S BACK-DOOR MEETING; MACHINATIONS TO EXTEND THE CAREY-SHULER CASE

After the Codina case collapsed, defendants' only remaining way to keep Spence-Jones off the commission was the fraudulent Carey-Shuler case, now discredited by Carey-Shuler herself. From its inception, the Shuler case lacked probable cause. The SAO Defendants had the documents disproving their case from the beginning. After Carey-Shuler's deposition on June 21, 2010, it was painfully



Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones with school board member Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall and entourage.

obvious the case was a sham.

Given that Carey-Shuler testified in June 2010 that she authorized the funds, why did the case continue through August 2011? The same reason defendants launched the case in the first instance: to keep Spence-Jones off the commission for as long as possible.

In the summer of 2011, Regalado visited Rundle at the SAO's office. Regalado and Rundle intended the meeting to be secret.

In order to avoid a written, public record of the secret meeting, Regalado was snuck into the SAO building, and did not go through the normal identification process.

On information and belief, in this secret, back-door meeting, Regalado and Rundle discussed how they could continue the fraudulent prosecution against Spence-Jones, in order to keep her from regaining her seat on the commission.

Regalado was intent on keeping Spence-Jones off the commission for multiple reasons. He knew he did not and could not control her vote. Most pressingly, Regalado was intent on firing the Miami police [chief], Miguel Exposito, which ultimately would require a majority vote on the commission. This was a high-profile political issue in Miami, and Regalado was concerned that Spence-Jones would vote against his decision to fire Exposito.

Regalado sought to fire Exposito in retaliation for Exposito's decision to raid more than a dozen locations containing machines, or illegal gambling machines. On information and belief, Regalado was and is a close ally of companies that build, operate, or market these illegal gambling machines, and received large campaign contributions from these companies and business owners.

Rundle had her own reasons to ensure that Exposito was fired. In January 2011, he had criticized her for prosecutorial delays in investigating fatal shootings by police officers.

In May 2010, he also accused her of dropping a public-corruption case against the grandson of civic leader Georgia Ayers, in order to curry favor with Ms. Ayers.

As Exposito later described Rundle: "The problem I have with her is that she is very aggressive against certain politicians or government workers, yet with others she takes the soft approach. She gives you all the reasons in the world to not go after them... I think she needs to go."

On information and belief, during the summer 2011 meeting, Regalado and Rundle conspired to postpone dismissing the Indictment [against Spence-Jones in the Carey-Shuler case] until at least after the commission voted on Exposito's removal.

On July 8, 2011, at Rundle's direction, Scruggs sent an e-mail to Raben demanding that Spence-Jones make certain statements in return for dropping the [Carey-Shuler] case. Rundle and Scruggs knew there was no basis to pursue the Carey-Shuler case, and that they had no right to make any demands in return for dismissing a fraudulent case.

As a condition of the SAO's decision to drop the fraudulent case, Rundle and Scruggs demanded that Spence-Jones "accept responsibility" for "regrettable" actions. Rundle and Scruggs also demanded Spence-Jones admit there was "probable cause" for a "fair prosecution."

Spence-Jones refused to make these false statements.

Yet even once the SAO's office agreed to a dismissal, they attempted to delay in order to delay Spence-Jones's return to the commission until after the Exposito vote.

As part of her arrangement with Regalado, Rundle repeatedly sought to delay an August 24, 2011, court date, so that she could postpone dismissing the case. Spence-Jones's counsel forced her hand, and refused.

On August 23, 2011, the day before the August 24 court conference, the SAO Defendants finally filed a nolle prosequi to dismiss the Carey-Shuler case.

TWO YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS: A PUBLIC SERVANT IN RUINS

As a direct result of defendants' conspiracy, Spence-Jones has been gravely injured. Michelle Spence-Jones was kept out of office for nearly two years, unable to serve her district or the people of Miami. She lost her liberty. She lost her income. She incurred legal fees to defend herself against the baseless prosecutions. Her business and personal reputation was severely damaged. She suffered immense emotional, psychological, and physical distress as a result of this entire ordeal. The incident almost destroyed her life and her family. As a result of what the defendants did, Michelle Spence-Jones lost two years of her life.

During those years, and still today, Rundle remains the State Attorney for Miami-Dade County.

During those years, and still today, Regalado remains the mayor of Miami.

After both of the prosecution's lead witnesses — Barbara Carey-Shuler and Armando Codina — described Scruggs as a liar who deceived them, and after both cases against Spence-Jones were revealed as a complete and utter sham, Scruggs was removed from the public-corruption unit of the SAO and transferred into a different unit. However, Scruggs today remains at the SAO, employed by Rundle, with power to investigate, arrest, imprison, and prosecute.

After the criminal cases collapsed, the new governor of Florida was forced by law to reinstate Spence-Jones as the commissioner for District 5. Spence-Jones today is a commissioner again, vulnerable once again to the ongoing conspiracy by Rundle and her co-conspirators to remove Spence-Jones, apparently at any cost.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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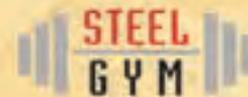


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All Aboard for the Future

The Purple Line, a new urban installation, imagines what commuter-train travel in Miami could look like

By Adam Schachner
Special to the BT

Miami waited almost 30 years for the Metrorail system to upgrade its destinations. This past July, county transit launched the Orange Line, and Miami's elevated train started rolling toward the future; the formerly two-dimensional county bisector now sports multiple routes.

The Orange Line is a pragmatic addition to an aging line, branching off the standard railway for a quick jaunt to Miami International Airport. The program is direct and efficient, yet it represents the stunted progress that is characteristic of Miami's vision for growth.

After all, the Orange Line is just one more stop on a limited line. Though useful and forward-thinking, the extra station is a baby step toward integrated transit reaching the expanse of Miami's neighborhoods and demographics. A majority of communities are still inaccessible by train.

Commuters may have noticed some subtle changes. One particular aesthetic addition at each station: green and orange dots painted on the station benches. These spots are reminiscent of the markers for multiple transit lines at stations and hubs in transit-oriented cities. The dots are informative and attractive, but seem subdued when placed next to Metrorail maps detailing the two-directional route.

Now imagine one more splash of color on the two-tone map: purple, as in Miami's Purple Line.

The new station opens on Friday, March 8, in the Design District. A unique terminal will join Midtown and Buena Vista, and will offer the amenities and attractions of a proper central station. Food, vendors, and business space

will provide commuters with services, while entertainment and commercial opportunities will keep the station lively.

The space is not just a mode for movement; it is a gathering place. Music, galleries, educational workshops, and outlets for civic engagement will make the Purple Line station Miami's revolutionary transit hub. This innovation is a community fixture unlike any Miami has seen.

Perhaps this is because Miami-Dade Transit has no actual Purple Line in the works. The experimental station is part commuter activism, part civic engagement, and part pop-up art experience, illustrating what many Miami commuters crave: a transit stop with a cosmopolitan feel.

Go to your computer and Google the transit maps for train routes in major cities such as New York, Moscow, Tokyo, or Paris. All have railway cartography featuring multi-colored lines and circuits. These maps are as much informative commuter guides as modern art; they'd look beautiful framed and displayed in your living room. Miami's map, by comparison, shows a lonely line, running up and down the county like an afterthought.

The Purple Line draws attention to the life our transit map lacks.

On March 8 and 9, the Purple Line will convert the Design District's Parking Lot 54, on NE 2nd Avenue under the I-195 overpass, from urban waste space into a Florida East Coast Railway terminal.

The project is primarily supported by the Miami Foundation, and initially conceptualized by urban planning graduate students from Florida Atlantic University. Anna McMaster, a student leading the effort, defines the Purple Line as a civic experiment and "educational exhibit in which people can tangibly experience, touch, and interact

with an improved public space."

Among the attractions provided by this installation is a chance to imagine Miami's potential. A festive atmosphere will bring together a cross-section of Miami's creative thinkers.

On one end of the station, the community-engagement network Catalyst Miami hosts a think tank they have dubbed a "civic innovation hub." This will include "Lot 54 Imagine(d)," an art installation and lecture series on growth and progress in a city eager to develop.

Walk across the terminal and you will encounter students from the Miami Arts Charter School creating transit-themed artwork and poetry. An exhibit from Wynwood's Brisky Gallery will maintain the spirit of revitalization by retrofitting cargo haulers into usable art displays.

Meanwhile, the Purple Line will be temporarily added to the City of Miami trolley service's monthly art-walk route, delivering people throughout downtown, Wynwood, and the Design District at no cost.

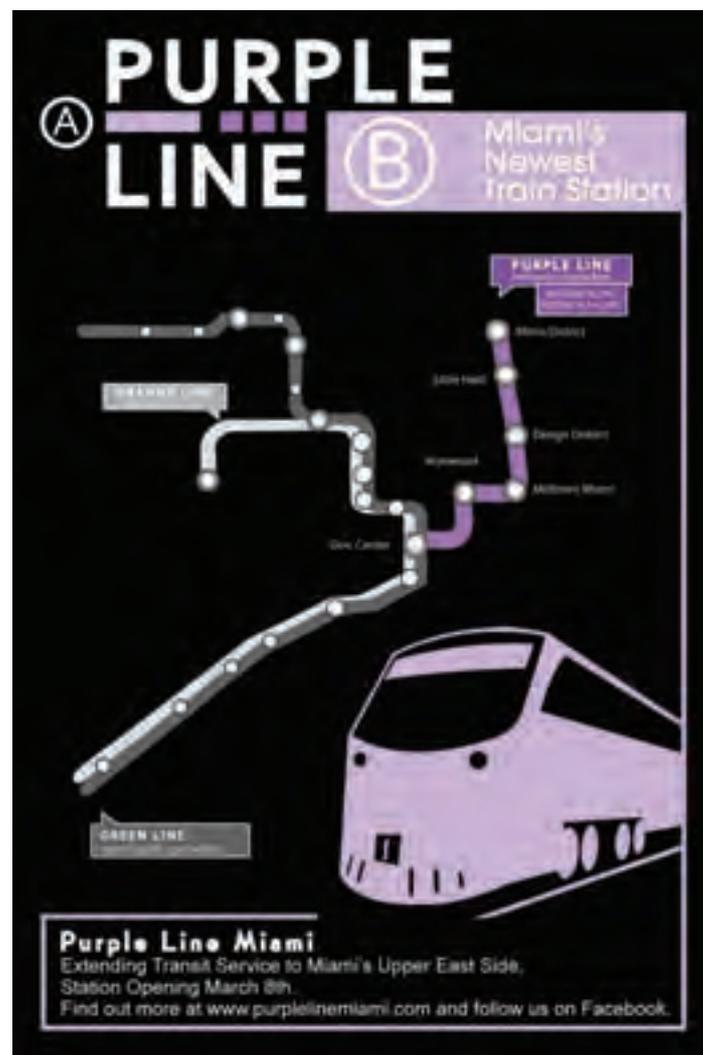
The idea for a pop-up transit stop evolved to demonstrate ways to improve Miami's underutilized urban areas. The Purple Line envisions a sample city space as the Grand Central Terminal that Miami is missing.

The concept is inspiration in action, according to Marta Vicedo, the visionary

who brought together various local groups and businesses to develop the Purple Line. "You bring people, life, and light," according to her overview, to "transform the space with a very small investment. It doesn't require a lot of money, just effort among people working together."

This is not the first time Vicedo and McMaster have collaborated to reimagine a cityscape. In June 2012, the two helped conceptualize Better Block Fort Lauderdale. This project closed down a warehouse street in Flagler Arts Village and improved the landscape by adding handcrafted bus benches, galleries, artisan vendors, and even garden space. A mundane storage district became an epicenter of urban renewal.

Meanwhile, Vicedo and McMaster had their eyes set on Miami. They approached Emerge Miami, a community group that creates social ties among activists. Using this network to brainstorm potential blocks for revitalization,



Imaginary transit: Purple Line poster for the pop-up event March 8 and 9.

Courtesy of Demo Graphics

Continued on page 52

Power in Numbers

A plan to politically divide Miami's Upper Eastside has united residents in opposition

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

For 16 years Miami's Upper Eastside neighborhoods have been represented by one city commissioner. Now that may change.

The Miami City Commission will soon be redrawing the boundaries of five commission districts that divide the Magic City. Among the proposals made in a 105-page report prepared by consultant Miguel De Grandy is removing Shorecrest, Palm Grove, and the western half of the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District from District 2 transferring the neighborhoods to District 5.

The main reason for this is simple: Federal law requires that Miami's five commission districts be roughly equal in population. District 2, where the Upper Eastside is located, has too many people. Neighboring District 5, which includes the impoverished neighborhoods of Overtown, Liberty City, and Little Haiti, has too few.

But Upper Eastside activists say they don't want to be divided. Instead they're demanding that the entire area either remain in District 2 or be incorporated into District 5. "We are a united in solidarity as community of interest," says Ken Jett, president of the Shorecrest Homeowners Association, "and we want to stay together."

Dozens of speakers of various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds said the same thing during a workshop held on February 21 at Legion Memorial Park's community center, attended by more than 100 Upper Eastside residents. Their primary concern is that a divided Upper Eastside, a string of communities straddling Biscayne Boulevard from 36th to 87th streets between Biscayne Bay and NE Fourth Court, will have a much weaker voice in either District 2 or District 5.

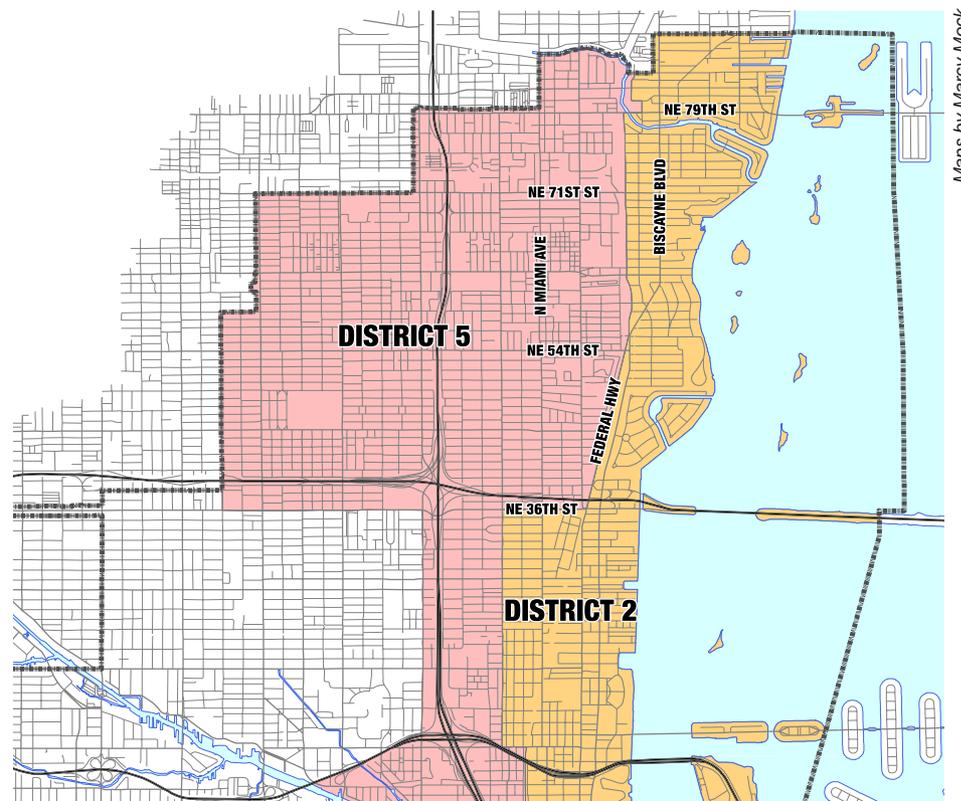
"It's hard enough to have meetings with one commissioner, but two commissioners?" says Louis Bourdeau, president of the Bayside Residents Association. "I think that creates a lot of problems and, as an Upper Eastsider, I think we have to be in one district or the other."

But the wishes of the Upper Eastside community don't necessarily conform to the desires of Miami city commissioners, who are rushing to finalize their own districts' borders in time for a potentially contentious city election on November 5. The election will likely include a showdown between Mayor Tomás Regalado, who is running for a second term, and his challenger, Commissioner Francis Suarez. District 5 Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones is also running for re-election, unless she's barred from doing so by a lawsuit filed by her political adversary, Rev. Richard Dunn, who claims she's already been term-limited.

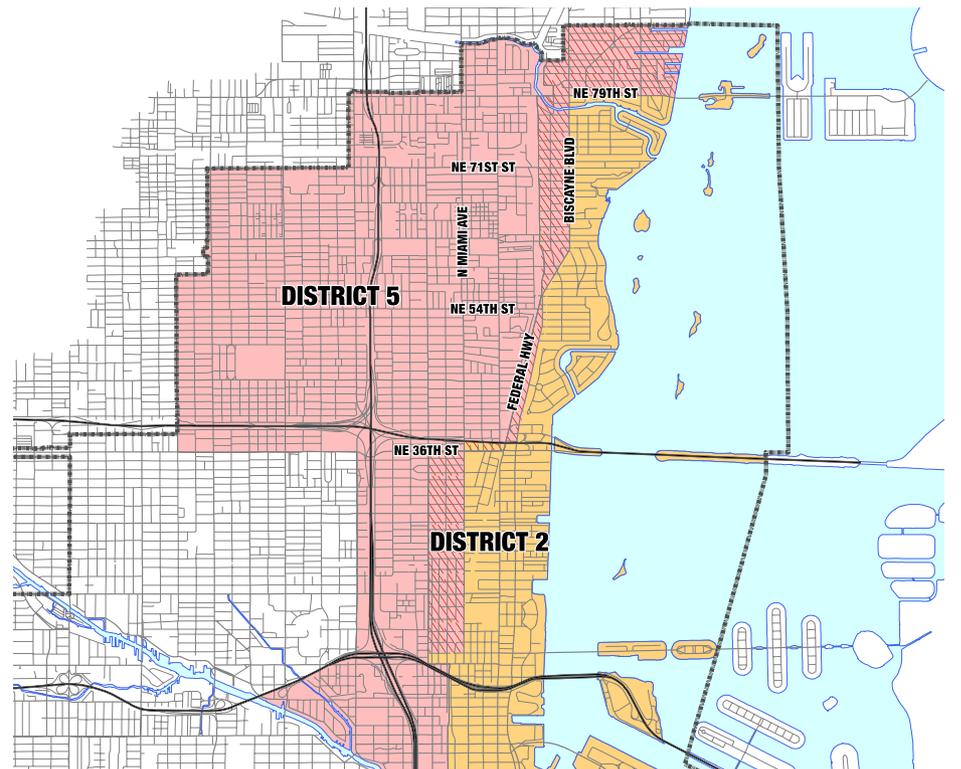
Further complicating matters, Spence-Jones is suing the mayor, alleging that her arrest for corruption in 2009 was part of a plot orchestrated by Regalado and Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle to force her from office. (For more on that political drama, see "Magic City Madhouse," page 22.)

The future shape of District 5 will likely influence Spence-Jones's chances for re-election, should she be allowed to run, says Sean Foreman, assistant professor of political science at Barry University. "Her district is safer the way it's drawn now," he says.

But District 5, which now has a 75-percent black majority, can't remain in its current form. That's because District 5 has 16 percent fewer people than Miami's other four districts. But District 2 — an area that encompasses Miami's most prosperous neighborhoods, including Coconut Grove, Midtown Miami, Edgewater, Brickell, the Upper Eastside,



Miami City Commission District 2 and District 5, both of which continue farther south than shown here.



Under the plan, the hatch-mark areas would move from District 2 (Commissioner Marc Sarnoff) to District 5 (Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones).

a portion of the Venetian Islands, and parts of downtown — has 20 percent more people than the other districts. To achieve a balance, District 2 needs to shed about 16,500 people while District 5 must gain at least 12,800 residents.

That imbalance could be solved by simply placing the entire Upper Eastside and its 12,860 inhabitants inside District 5. But that would dilute the district's

Continued on page 50

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Community News: **BISCAYNE CORRIDOR**

Power in Numbers

Continued from page 49

black super majority, De Grandy says. The Shorecrest area north of 79th Street and Palm Grove west of Biscayne Boulevard have significant black populations, explains De Grandy, but “the demographics are remarkably different more on the eastern side of Biscayne Boulevard. The number of African Americans lowers dramatically.”

For most of Miami’s 116-year existence, members of the city commission were elected by the municipality’s entire population. But in 1997, after a controversial Hispanic politician, Humberto Hernandez, won a commission seat that traditionally had been reserved for the black community, a voting-rights lawsuit was filed in federal court.

As a result, the city created a new system in which commissioners were elected within five distinct districts while an “executive mayor” with the power to veto legislation and hire and fire the city manager (with commission approval) was elected at-large. Under this scheme, three of the five districts were designed to have large Hispanic majorities, District 5 would represent the black communities, and District 2 was created as an Anglo stronghold.

Technically, racial gerrymandering is prohibited by federal law, but so is intentional dilution of minority communities. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, Miami’s black population had shrunk to just 17 percent of the city’s total. Hispanics, on the other hand, made up 70 percent.

In his report, De Grandy points out that Hispanics tend to reject the preferred candidates of black voters. “Statistical models indicate that in the 2010 general election, [U.S. Senate candidate] Kendrick Meek received nearly zero percent of the Hispanic vote while garnering nearly 100 percent of the black vote [in Miami],” he writes.

Miami’s black voters, according to De Grandy’s report, also cast 100 percent of their votes for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, for Dan Gelber for state attorney general in 2010, and for Alex Sink for governor in 2010.

In contrast, only 33 percent of Miami’s Hispanics voted for Obama in 2008 and 54 percent in 2012, 25 percent voted for Sink, and 22 percent voted for Gelber.

De Grandy declined to include recent local races in his report, owing to low voter turnout in the black community. However, Foreman is sure that without

a black-majority district, there won’t be a black commissioner at city hall. “It’s pretty common in all levels of politics for people to vote for someone who looks like them,” Foreman tells the *BT*.

But Ken Jett of Shorecrest estimates that even after absorbing the entire Upper Eastside (which is 38-percent Hispanic, 30-percent black, and 28-percent Anglo), District 5 will still have a 67-percent black majority.

Adds Eileen Bottari, a Palm Grove homeowner for 30 years: “My definition of a majority has always been that, during an election, a majority is 50 percent plus 1. Why does District 5 need 70 percent?” That sentiment was expressed more pointedly at a community meeting on February 12, when several Upper Eastside residents speculated that Spence-Jones wouldn’t want the entire Upper Eastside because its residents might vote as a bloc and turn her out of office.

Spence-Jones didn’t return phone calls seeking comment for this story, but last month she said that placing the Upper Eastside in District 5 “creates a scenario that allows for another group to not have a voice.”

Cornelius Shiver, Spence-Jones’s chief-of-staff, insists his boss is keeping an open mind: “The District 5 commissioner has some interests in [ensuring] that the Haitian and African-American community is represented on the city commission, which goes without saying. But we’ll let the experts and consultants come back and we’ll see how the numbers play out.”

Robert Malone, president of the Hadley Park Homeowners Association in Liberty City, thinks that the Upper Eastside will be a welcome addition to District 5. “They’re well informed and they’re aggressive in terms of politics and I think we need that,” says Malone, who ran for District 5 commissioner in 2009. “We have some knuckleheads who continue to not do right by the community.”

Deidria Davis, an Overtown resident and member of the city’s Community Relations Board, is skeptical that the predominately middle-class Upper Eastside fits within District 5. “I’m not quite sure if it’s going to help the community,” she says.

But what if the Upper Eastside remains in District 2? De Grandy says he’ll then have to find other areas to put inside District 5. In a recent interview with the *Miami Herald*, Spence-Jones said if the Upper Eastside wanted to “stay together,”

Continued on page 52

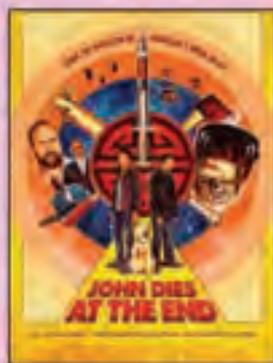
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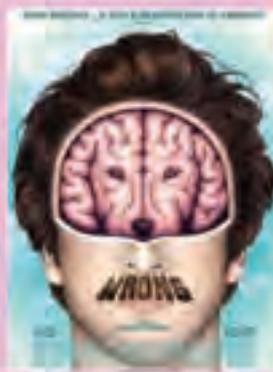
MAR 15TH TO 21ST
REINCARNATED



MAR 21ST TO 24TH
A PLACE AT THE TABLE & THE JEFFERY DAHMER FILES



MAR 28TH TO 31ST
ABCs OF DEATH
MAR 29TH TO APR 4TH
WRONG



Miami Shores

at Miami Theater Center

MAR 1ST TO 10TH

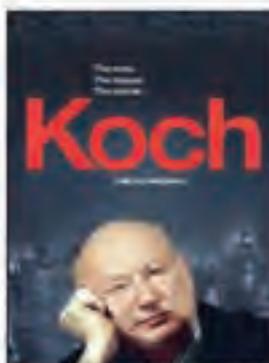
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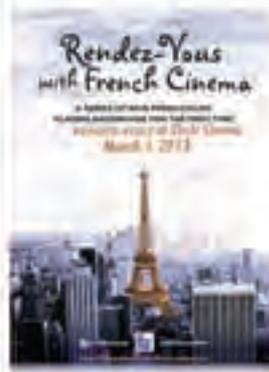
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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Power in Numbers

Continued from page 50

De Grandy could find "another place to pick up people for me. The only place I could think of would be Midtown."

Bottari says she asked Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, a Coconut Grove resident and the current representative of District 2, if he'd be willing to give up Midtown Miami in order to keep the entire Upper Eastside. Reports Bottari: "He said, 'no.'" (Sarnoff did not return calls from the BT.)

Foreman believes there's a certain amount of prestige that comes with having prosperous areas such as Midtown Miami in your district. "The larger your tax base...the greater your influence appears to be on the commission," he says.

Some Upper Eastside residents have long felt neglected by District 2, an area that has been represented by a Coconut Grove resident since 1997. "There is a sentiment among some Upper Eastsiders that we're the ugly stepchild here," Jett says. "That we are the have-nots when it comes to District 2, that we are too far removed geographically and economically from Coconut Grove, that it's easy to be lost."

Jett clarifies that his homeowner association's official position is that Shorecrest is willing to work with the commissioner of either district, just as long as the entire Upper Eastside is included in it. "I think politically, economically,

and culturally we'll be harmed if we're split up," Jett says.

Ironically, one of the directives to De Grandy was that, whenever possible, the districts should "keep neighborhoods and communities of interest intact." Several Upper Eastside activists also complained to the city commission last month that they were not notified about workshops held last year. (The meetings on District 1 and District 2, held at city hall, drew no residents.) De Grandy maintains that federal law doesn't require public hearings on redistricting.

Still, commissioners decided at their February 14 meeting to hold two more workshops on redistricting, the first being at Legion Park's community center. A second workshop will be held at city hall in Coconut Grove on March 4 at 6:30 p.m.

Thereafter, the Miami City Commission will take up redistricting on March 14. De Grandy hopes that by mid-April the city will have a plan ready for the Miami-Dade Elections Department.

So far the commission hasn't ordered De Grandy to prepare an alternative to the plan he already developed, which splits the Upper Eastside. However, Ken Jett is hopeful that De Grandy and city commissioners will reconsider. If not, he says, legal action is a possibility. "We're not taking any options off the table," he says.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Purple Line

Continued from page 48

Viciedo noticed a pattern in their discussions: "Every spot we came up with was right next to the train line. It was serendipitous; everything that spoke to us was by a railway."

From that observation, all other components took to the tracks. Conceptualizing a transit future evolved into an opportunity to show Miamians an alternative to the car. The Purple Line aims to make that alternative into a tangible destination.

In Viciedo's estimation, Miami's current transit stops lack the liveliness of commuter hubs. She notes that "the primary connection the Metrorail and Metrobus make with people is emotions of frustration. What we want to do with the Purple Line is create comfort and inspire connectivity with people and community, and provide services that facilitate access to

commerce, food, entertainment, and simple things, like a cup of coffee. There is something that provides a 'homey' connection."

The Purple Line represents large ambitions. Given the organizational effort and diverse participants, the experiment provokes Miami commuters and officials to contemplate the future. Are we so satisfied by current roadway conditions that we are willing to continue overlooking a convenient mass-transit alternative?

Viciedo challenges this complacency, suggesting that "living in a city where you are forced to have a car limits true freedom."

When the Purple Line opens for business, it will offer more than an experimental train station. It will be a vision for Miami's transit future, as long as commuters are willing to do more than simply imagine it.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Sex and the City Center

You want adult entertainment? Try the Shoppes at the Waterways

By Jay Beskin
BT Contributor

Long before the loquacious former Congressman Barney Frank became synonymous with financial reform, he was known for something else. As a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Frank sought to confine all of Boston's adult entertainments into a single red-light zone. He was not successful.

Cognizant that the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibits municipalities from excluding adult-entertainment establishments within their borders, the first Aventura city commission (of which I was a member) took up Frank's idea by rather creatively — indeed, brazenly — zoning a red-light district in an area in plain sight of everyone who lives or visits our city.

Our adult district is roughly that area abutting the east side of Biscayne Boulevard at NE 187th Street, fronting the outdoor mall formerly known as Loehmann's Fashion Island and soon to be known as Town Center Aventura. Currently the zone's only occupant is the new PNC Bank branch; the rest is parking lots.

Our adult district was designed to pretty much ensure that no adult business would ever worm its way into the City of Excellence. It was inconceivable that the owner of the mall, which holds the land in the red-light district, would permit adult uses there. What's more, there isn't enough square footage in the district to sustain an adult establishment of any appreciable size.

No establishments called Pure Gold or Dollhouse will ever grace our city. Nor will our commission ever be burdened by the unpleasant matters that occasionally



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

The Shoppes at the Waterways: A downscale but very popular public space.

surface in Hallandale Beach or North Miami Beach, where the latter's city council was forced recently to decide whether to permit adult entertainers to appear sans clothing. The North Miami Beach council ultimately determined that full nudity is indeed permissible in that city. At least one council member was in favor of it on the theory that it saves jobs and benefits the local economy.

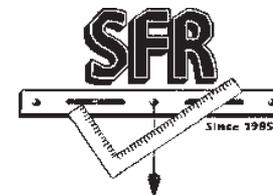
The Aventura City Commission never addressed the financial aspects of adult entertainment, but one might

plausibly make the case that if the PNC Bank tellers go topless, a lot of banking business would be attracted to our city. But that won't happen, and there will be no lewd and lascivious activity that will taint what is happening at the PNC Bank.

Sometime after the adult entertainment matter was put to bed, the Aventura commission turned its attention to creating a town center out of barren Loehmann's Fashion Isle. Taking its cue from the modern school of urban planning, which emphasizes the desirability of pedestrian-oriented

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daytime, evening, and weekend activity centers incorporating a mix of low- and medium-scale uses and amenities, the commission, working with the then-owner of the mall, Prudential Insurance Company, rezoned the mall to provide for mixed-use office, residential, and retail.

The redevelopment commenced, and then the redevelopment ceased. After the construction of the Venture condominium building and some rebuilding of the mall itself on the southeastern corner, the economy collapsed, and the vision for the town center was never fulfilled.

Several years ago, Turnberry Associates purchased Loehmann's Fashion Island from Prudential, and now, presumably, Turnberry will try to create a town center, as the new name implies. Turnberry's website states that the revitalized center will have a new architectural design, "lush landscaping and enhanced streetscapes, a gazebo for afternoon and evening events" and improved pedestrian and traffic flow. It will house nationally branded restaurants and retailers, including a Saks Fifth Avenue Off 5th outlet.

This is all out of the mixed-use play-book and has become pretty standard

stuff. One can only hope for its success, but a betting man wouldn't put odds on it.

For, in certain respects, this appears to be merely another attempt to rejigger a mall that has proven immune to numerous attempts at revitalization through the years. National stores and restaurants by themselves won't do it. For a town center to thrive, it must become a neighborhood. And to see how that works, we only need look across town, at the Shoppes at the Waterways, in the northern end of the city.

The Shoppes were intended as an amenity for the residents of the condominiums and town homes surrounding the Waterways Marina. Those residents can gain access to the Shoppes by a walkway bordering the marina. Although the development has undistinguished architecture, it does feature two large restaurant spaces fronting the marina, lots of outdoor tables and seating, a clock tower, a faux lighthouse, and a gazebo in the waterway, connected to the center by a pedestrian bridge. (No doubt the gazebo has been used for adult entertainment of the noncommercial variety.)

The Shoppes evolved organically, both literally and figuratively, without city

government involvement. For a long time, the Shoppes housed a coffee shop and an ice cream parlor. Its main attraction was the Unicorn market and restaurant, one of the largest health-food emporiums in the area.

The Unicorn was a unique purveyor, attracting customers from all over north-east Dade, especially the younger types who worked out, or pretended to, at the Bally's gym next door. The customers, intermingling with Waterways residents, would linger a while to enjoy the marina view and perhaps a coffee or an ice cream outdoors.

Although the Unicorn market and restaurant have closed, crowds continue to enliven the Shoppes both day and night, despite the absence of any nationally recognized retailers or restaurateurs. The kosher market Sarah's Tent took the place of the Unicorn, and four kosher restaurants have opened their doors. That, together with an Orthodox synagogue, a meeting place for young Jewish singles called Space, and regular outdoor entertainment by an Israeli performer, have begot an ethnic enclave of sorts, a place where people of similar cultural and religious identity gather, kibitz, and enjoy entertainment.

The local merchants, without the benefit of sophisticated marketing studies, keenly understand the needs and wants of their customers. Whatever the new Town Center Aventura attempts to do, the Shoppes at the Waterways currently is Aventura's true town center.

Intuitively, this is a puzzling phenomenon, for the Shoppes do not possess the upscale image for which Aventura is famous. A number of the storefronts, including the two restaurants on the marina, are vacant. The parking lot is dismal and bleak, marked by little landscaping, light poles that don't work, and knocked-down traffic signs lying on the ground.

An engineer who resides in the Waterways opines that the bridge to the gazebo is in significant disrepair and an unsafe structure. None of this seems to bother the patrons.

If the new Town Center Aventura, with all its national brands, fails to take off, future developers might look to the Shoppes for a blueprint for success: Go downscale. Perhaps even a little adult entertainment right in its front yard?

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Goal Is Sleep

As the annual Haiti Cup soccer tournament approaches, residents of Biscayne Landing prepare for some very late, very noisy nights

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Ruth Torres of the Oaks Towers in Biscayne Landing wants you to know that she does, indeed, like to get down and groove to Haitian music.

The human resources consultant, teacher, and single mom of school-age kids also wants to inform you and the North Miami City Council that she does *not* like it blasting from the North Miami Athletic Stadium across NE 151st Street at 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. on Sunday nights, when kids and parents need rest for school.

But, right now, that's the plan for the 13th annual Haiti Cup soccer tournament and concert, on *11 consecutive* Sunday nights, from March 10 till May 19.

So Ms. Torres went before the council on February 12 to ask it to dial back the noise and shut off the speakers at 10:00 p.m., rather than 11:00 p.m., as other cities do, and as North Miami's very own noise ordinance dictates. Last year she got 142 signatures from her fellow Biscayne Landing neighbors protesting the noise.

Ms. Torres came to the council meeting well prepared with evidence and research gathered from other cities, all of which had rejected requests to hold a similar concert at similar hours. From the North Miami council, however, she got this answer: Tough cookies.

(Disclosure: I'm one of Ms. Torres's neighbors. I have a daughter who goes to a magnet high school 17 miles away.



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

Ruth Torres at the stadium, with home in the background: "I'll sue the city."

We set the alarm for 5:30 a.m. and would have signed Ms. Torres's petition, too, had we known about it. And, like Ms. Torres, we enjoy Haitian music.)

Scott Galvin, who was the only council member who supported Ms. Torres's request, tried and failed even to get a second to the motion to table the discussion for the next meeting, on February 26. He was seeking to moderate noise levels for all events, including city-sponsored ones.

Instead, Galvin and fellow council members got into a shouting match and verbal food fight that exposed the raw ethnic and racial fissures on the council. Mayor Andre Pierre said the proposal was "singling out a group." (The city already singles itself out as a special group by granting itself the noise ordinance exception, the very loophole Galvin was trying to close.)

Galvin, visibly upset, strongly protested he was not singling anyone out.

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by Derek

Not wanting to be left out, Councilwoman Marie Steril dove in, saying, “Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah” (that’s a quote), while banging repeatedly with a gavel.

Ms. Torres walked away incensed, declaring, “I’ll sue the city.”

And so, starting March 10, Biscayne Landing residents — and others for a good mile around — will have to endure the groove until 11:00 p.m., while the Haiti Cup packs between 2000 and 4500 people into the 10-acre facility for 11 straight Sunday nights.

Pay 10 bucks and you can catch some spirited soccer and some of the best Haitian bands around. It’s a good bet you’ll also score some tasty goat roti from a friendly vendor, something that just doesn’t happen in those franchise-laden, antiseptic communities to the north, like West Boca or Abacoa in Jupiter. It’s a big part of why we love North Miami. But, still...

This year 16 teams of Haitian-Americans, representing different Haitian cities, will play round-robin soccer tournaments, starting at 4:00 p.m. The music will crank up around 9:30, and reverberate across Biscayne Bay, so that residents

of Bal Harbour, Bay Harbor Islands, and southern Sunny Isles Beach will be able to hear it.

For the May 19 finals, I suggest nearby residents take a Sunday afternoon nap. And, if you’re driving out of Biscayne Landing that afternoon, be patient after 4:00 p.m. That’s when a crowd of 4500 is expected for the finals, with *two* bands playing that night, rather than the usual one.

In fairness, you can’t really blame the organizer or company sponsor. For 13 straight years, promoter Patrick LeFebre has always done the right thing, building the annual event into a smashing success.

He’s a good guy who has played by the rules, paid his fees, worked hard, and hustled to get city cooperation. He has received valuable backing from Madame Gougousse Foods, Miami wholesalers and purveyors of fine Caribbean packaged foods such as jasmine-scented rice. (You can check out the Kreyol commercials on YouTube. Madame Gougousse is a big name in the Caribbean.)

“We will do our best to shut down at 10:30,” LeFebre says. “We’ll just do one

band on Sunday, rather than two bands, except for the finals. The music is a very big part of what we do. That’s what helps the event grow. We don’t want to hurt anyone. We want everyone to have a good time.”

This year, LeFebre has secured bands venerated in the Haitian-American community, including T-Vice, Gabel, Disip, and Carimi.

All well and good, but a question remains: Is it time to move the Haiti Cup soccer tournament to another venue in 2014?

Over the past couple of years, lots of people have moved into the 300-plus Biscayne Landing units right next door to the event site. Today Biscayne Landing is bustling with families, attracted by its proximity and easy walking distance to David Lawrence Jr. K-8 (already surging way past capacity), Alonzo and Tracy Mourning High School, and Florida International University’s Biscayne Bay Campus, less than a mile down the road.

And thousands more people will be coming in within the next five years, as Oleta Partners embarks on the biggest development project ever to hit North

Miami. (See my previous column, “Let the Boom Begin,” in January’s *BT*.)

Ruth Torres, in all her digging, came up with a possible alternate site for the Haiti Cup in 2014: Ives Estates Park, a 95-acre county facility just west of I-95, off Ives Dairy Road.

Oops, just got this bulletin. Councilman Michael Blynn, who conspicuously would not even second Scott Galvin’s motion to defer — while his District 2 opponents in the May 14 City of North Miami election, Carol Keys and Joseph Haber, looked on — placed the subject back on the city council agenda for February 26. (Hopefully, concerned residents made their voices heard there.)

Beyond that, I invite city council members and staff to join me and other constituents at my apartment on a Haiti Cup Sunday of their choosing — I suggest May 19 — and groove to the music through hurricane-resistant doors and windows. I’ll lay out the wine and cheese. The catch: All guests must set their alarms for 5:30 a.m. the next day. No cheating.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Close Encounters of the Shores Kind

A busload of young perverts, dinner with an enterprising stranger, and a kidney infection make for one interesting month

By **Jen Karetnick**
BT Contributor

Every February, during the week of the South Beach Wine and Food Festival, three things happen: I turn a year older, my parents come down from Jersey to visit, and I get sick. One year I was sidelined by swine flu. This time it was a kidney infection.

So it's my husband who winds up meeting Giada De Laurentiis at the Ritz-Carlton South Beach, or communing with neighbor-chefs Douglas Rodriguez, Andrea Curto-Randazzo, and Dewey LoSasso (all Shores dwellers) at events like Swine and Wine, while I suck down cranberry juice, lemonade, and antibiotics.

But that's okay. I've had plenty of interesting encounters myself, right here in the Shores. Take that night a couple of weeks ago, when I was picking my son up from piano lessons at Miss Jane's Music Studio. I was on the phone with my mom, planning her visit, when a yellow school bus crammed with teenagers stopped at the light on NE 2nd Avenue and 96th Street. Several of the students, hanging out the bus windows, told me how much they admired blonde women, and what they'd like to do to me — very loudly, and in very graphic terms.

I know I should have kept silent. But this particular incident happened a few days before my official mid-life crisis, and on the very same day that I had



experienced something similar while stopping in at the new Biscayne Diner.

Biscayne Diner takes the place of Reva's, a rather expensive Italian restaurant, which had a beer-and-wine license. These licenses usually transfer with a lease, and this was one of those extremely rare days when both my husband and I had the same hour free, so we wanted to meet for a drink.

I parked my car in the small lot and exited to wolf whistles from a passerby

on Biscayne Boulevard. The 20 yards into the restaurant felt like the Walk of Shame: I was hollered at, honked at, and leeringly assessed by enough men that I looked around to see if I was actually passing a construction site.

I'm not easily embarrassed, and maybe I should be secretly delighted that a 45-year-old woman can still get so much attention. But for a short stroll, while wearing the same outfit I wore to work, this was a bit much.



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So later that day, when the kids started in on me, too, I yelled back: "Hey, I'm on the phone with my *mother!* Show some respect!"

I had thought that being brave enough to address the drooling, tongue-wagging teens and mentioning the word "mother" to them might calm them down. It had the opposite effect. Even more kids started yelling about the ways they could sexually molest me, and how they could do the same to my mother.

If there were any adults on that school bus other than the driver, who was slouched down in his seat, I couldn't tell. Certainly no one stopped the students from harassing me, though by law there needs to be one adult present for every ten kids. But I couldn't locate any source of help — or blame, for that matter.

Miss Jane and my son heard the melee from several storefronts away. They thought there'd been a traffic accident. But when I described what happened, Remy shed some light on the situation. "I saw a bus at Miami Country Day when I was leaving school. It had the North Miami baseball team in it."

I can't prove that the bus contained the North Miami High School baseball team, but the pieces fall into place well enough to suggest it could have been them. No matter who it was, in the end, it's one of the reasons why I still personally escort my 12-year-old to and from his music lessons, which are past nightfall.

Even in the heart of our sleepy little village, offense and aggression occur. And when next to nobody is on the street to help you should something happen, it pays to be safe.

Incidentally, Biscayne Diner didn't have wine to serve. But the staff said it would soon, along with takeout menus. So Jon and I went, as per usual, to Pizza Fiore for a glass and a slice.

Of course, not every "stumble upon" in Miami Shores is offensive. On another one of those wine-seeking nights, Jon and I sat down at an outdoor table at the Shores's little French hideaway, Côte Gourmet. I try to frequent the restaurant as much as I can possibly frequent anything, if only to show my appreciation for the fact that it's still here.

While Côte Gourmet does a terrific lunch business, the place is frequently empty at night. So lone diners sitting next to you while sipping Cabernet and snacking on chicken livers don't go unnoticed; you tend to strike up conversations. After all, the guy is no doubt your neighbor, right? Only locals know about this café.

On this night, though, the gentleman in question, Cortland Joyce, was from South Miami. He was in the area for meetings with Whole Foods and other markets concerning Pop Nature, his gourmet popsicle line, which is inspired by Mexican *paletas* and uses only natural, gluten-free ingredients. Naturally, this produced a bit of conversation about where he sources his mangos for the balsamic mango flavor. (Yeah, we're *always* looking to give away our mangos.)

I didn't tell him I write about food (for other publications), so he was very surprised to run into me again at RA Sushi in South Miami, where I was making an appearance on behalf of *MIAMI Magazine* for the "Foodies Show Heart" event. I had designed a sushi roll with three kinds of salmon (raw, smoked,

and cooked) and avocado, as part of a competition between local epicures. The contestant whose roll received the most votes had money donated to the charity of their choice.

Even with new friend Joyce's nod, and some assistance from others, my roll didn't win. But it looks like Joyce is going to. He has been placing his popsicles in venues ranging from Books and Books in Coral Gables to the Standard Hotel and Spa in Miami Beach.

Nearby we can find them at Sarah's Tent in Aventura; the popsicles are certified kosher. And soon, I suspect, we'll be able to enjoy flavors such as "paleo" (pineapple, kale, beet, pea protein) and bourbon blackberry in our very own nearby Whole Foods.

And that's the real surprise: The Whole Foods is finally opening. Going by history, no doubt that's where the strangest culinary-themed encounters of all will occur. But until then, I have my used-to-be-brunette hair, and my mother, to provide an entire baseball team with more than enough entertainment.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Pigskin Politics

Is a proposal to publicly fund improvements at Sun Life Stadium out of bounds, or a winning call?

By **Frank Rollason**
BT Contributor

Well, here we are, discussing public funding for a private stadium venture one more time. As Yogi Berra would say, "It's déjà vu all over, again."

The usual band of thieves, er, I mean lobbyists — I apologize if thieves were offended — are out in force working every angle to make it happen and earn their crumbs from the public trough. But then, that's what lobbyists do, and it's our elected officials who bestow so much power on them. Why? Because lobbyists, through their connections, help fund campaigns, allowing our officials to

continue "serving" the "public."

And then there are the usual suspects who come to us, the public, as our protectors, offering to slay the corporate giant, or at least cut off the public source of sustenance that keeps the beast alive. Threats of opposition, even recall, from auto magnate Norman Braman should not be ignored by those who wish to continue to serve till death do us part.

Oh, what to do, what to do? The lonely world of the politician, whose primary mission is to stay in office in perpetuity, continuing to "serve" the "public," is indeed fraught with conflict. But enough of this diatribe. Let's talk about the stadium deal.



First, there is no deal currently being presented. The owner of the Miami Dolphins, billionaire Stephen Ross, simply has his hand out for \$200 million of taxpayer money to help improve Joe Robbie Stadium — it will always be Joe Robbie to me, because Mr. Robbie had the integrity to build it with his own money — so that we can compete (merely *compete*,

mind you) for the 2016 Super Bowl.

I marvel at how fast positions seem to be taken before there is any proposal on the table. I mean, sure, we know that Ross wants \$200 million and we know that if it were not for him making this request for our dollars, we would not even be discussing this issue. So it's really about "our dollars"



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being used in a way that some view as inappropriate and some view as smart economically for the growth and betterment of our community.

Keep in mind that Ross has pledged to privately fund half the proposed \$400 million renovation, an element sorely lacking from the Marlins' lopsided deal. (Half of the private funds could come from the National Football League itself.)

For this investment, the stadium will receive a canopy to protect fans from the elements, more comfortable seating, a greater number of seats closer to the field, larger HD screens, HD sports lighting, updated kitchens, and modern escalators and elevators.

The pro-funding group points out Miami-Dade residents will not be affected because the improvements will be funded by a bed tax — money that is generated by tourists, not by residents. While this may be true, those are still tax dollars in the system. The idea being proffered is to raise the bed tax a smidgen (smidgens are hardly ever noticed) so the rest of the already earmarked bed tax won't be affected.

While this may work in theory, I haven't heard that the proposed increase will be eliminated once the \$200 million mark is reached; perhaps no one would notice and the visitors and tourists would never be the wiser and that would add a few more dollars to the pot for whatever the next project might be.

All that said, \$200 million is still \$200 million. (We are reminded of the late U.S. Senator Everett Dirksen, who reportedly once remarked, "A million here and a million there and, pretty soon, we're talking about real money.") I recently heard of a novel idea for a public-input campaign that asks one simple question: "What project would you propose for the sum of \$200 million of public money?"

Not sure if this idea got any traction, but it does cause you to ponder what good could be done if \$200 million were dropped in your lap and you had say over where it went. I would dare say, giving it to a billionaire to improve his private enterprise would probably be way down on the list, if it made the list at all.

I think this is part of the public's problem with this proposal, or at least

our perception of this proposal. Many are assuming that it will be similar to the Marlins Park fiasco, but I sense this deal may be a little different. And that's why I'm holding off judgment until all the cards are on the table.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez has stated that if he cannot negotiate a package that is favorable to county residents, he will not support the funding, or even bring the proposal to the full commission. At this point we have no way of knowing what he may or may not be able to wrangle out of Ross, but I am willing to wait and see what the options may be before I support or oppose the funding.

Perhaps he may be able to have the county become a silent partner in the Dolphins and share the profits from the skyboxes, concessions, and parking forever and ever. (Amen.)

Wouldn't that make a difference, if the county were to have a steady revenue stream, even after the initial \$200 million were paid back? We, the residents of the county, could well end up receiving money, instead of taking a loss. The one thing I wouldn't like

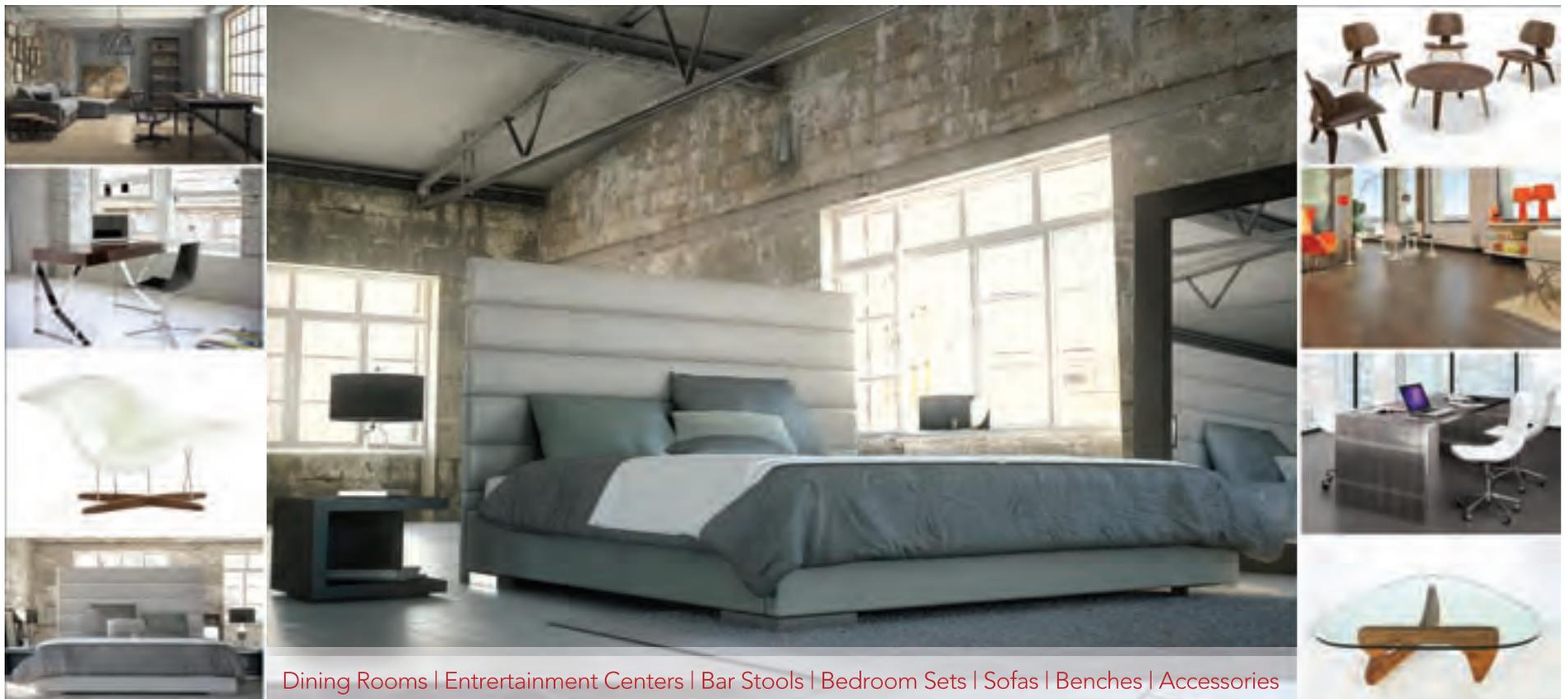
to see happen is for the county to be involved in the actual operation of the stadium. That would probably be a disaster. I would leave that to Ross and his team. Let the county just sit back and rake in our share.

Gimenez is already putting pressure on the NFL to commit to South Florida as a Super Bowl site *before* the final deal is struck. As for Braman, I'm somewhat puzzled with his apparent opposition to this proposal, when Gimenez is insisting on a public referendum before the funding is approved.

I recall that, on the Marlins deal, Braman's position was that if a public vote were held and the public approved the Marlins funding, he would drop his opposition. This time, however, he appears to be in opposition even if the public speaks.

So I say it's just too early to take a position. Let's see what the mayor can do and then vote the proposal up or down. That's how democracy is supposed to work, is it not?

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Not Kidding Around

A new documentary introduces us to Tomi Ungerer, who took children's literature to some very strange places

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

“Far out isn’t far enough,” says illustrator and author Tomi Ungerer, in an accent that rings with both German and French undertones. “It means that no matter how far your thinking, or your actions, or your reactions — no matter how far it is — it still is not far enough. Because one challenge, if it is worthy at all, has to be followed by a greater challenge.”

The now 82-year-old proclaims this at the end of a documentary titled, yes, *Far Out Isn’t Far Enough*, about his fascinating, outrageous, profound life, showing at the Miami International Film Festival this month. To say that Ungerer is a far-out character is an understatement, which is what intrigued the Miami-based filmmaker Brad Bernstein enough to bring his life to the big screen.

So who is Tomi Ungerer? Phaidon Press Limited, which began reissuing his books several years ago, described him to the *New York Times* as “the most famous children’s book author you have never heard of.” The reason for that, along with the reason the books have not been seen in English-language print for decades, is the basis of the tale, beautifully told through interviews with the author and other pioneering illustrators, such as Maurice Sendak and Jules Feiffer, and with images of his work, which are animated throughout the documentary.

In fact it was the 2008 *New York Times* article that caught the eye of Bernstein, a New York native whose media company, Corner of the Cave, is now based in Midtown Miami. Seeing

the headline “Watch the Children, That Subversive Is Back,” Bernstein says, “I thought, who *is* this guy? I’ve got to find out more.” Eventually he flew off to meet Ungerer at his birth home in Strasbourg, France, where, over numerous bottles of wine, a documentary was born.

Far Out made its first big splash at the Toronto International Film Festival in September. Ungerer flew in from Europe for the screening and, says Bernstein with a laugh, took advantage of the Q&A



Miami filmmaker Brad Bernstein: “I thought, who *is* this guy? I’ve got to find out more.”

session to show the audience what a strange character he *really* is.

In short, Ungerer is a tortured genius with a wicked sense of humor and an affinity for the perverse. He is always pressing boundaries, but as we see in the film, always with a twinkle in his eyes.

Born on the cusp of World War II in the border region of Alsace that straddles France and Germany, Ungerer tells us that fear and death were always close, but something he had to embrace to move on. At age three he was already doodling, and by the time the Germans invaded, he was documenting



Photo by Sam Norval

Tomi Ungerer: “Success is a mine field; it can easily blow up your head.”



Photo by Sam Norval

Untitled (1987-90).

his battle-ravaged home in illustrations, early works that his mother would keep, and that the film utilizes.

These years clearly shaped his future outlook, which is why they play such a large part in the film. It was a life of perpetual fear, where small children were exposed constantly to the extremes and injustices of life.

Postwar Europe proved no better for Ungerer and, in 1956, he took off for New York City. This world was also in transition, but in a more creative way; the city was attracting artists, writers, and musicians who would revolutionize American culture. Ungerer was one of them.

The beginning of the film shows a collage of Ungerer’s illustrations, some of them funny and some of them disturbingly violent, and violently sexual. “I am a self-taught, raving maniac,” says *Where the Wild Things Are* author Sendak, in one of the last interviews he gave before his death. “But not as crazy as Tomi. And not as great as Tomi.” Sendak tells us that, even for an unrestrained city like New York, Ungerer’s antics sometimes went too far, a habit which would color his reputation forever.

Ungerer’s first success as a children’s author was *CriCTOR*, about the adventures of a cuddly green snake — but still, a snake. Another was *Three Robbers*, which features three black-clad, axe-wielding men, who are eventually redeemed by an orphan girl.

Ungerer thought that children’s books needed some darkness. As he tells us in the film, how can we know the good without knowing the bad? It’s something that his friend Sendak agrees with, explaining that making illustrations about bunnies, where skies are perpetually blue and clouds white is “a conspiracy against children.... The assumption [being] that they are vacant.”

And yet Ungerer took it a step further. In a great scene that reveals the deep complexity of the man, he is walking around an exhibition of his early work, mostly shocked at how bad the stuff is, until he comes across a sketch and reads

the caption out loud: "Ogre Burning Books and Boiling Child." He breaks out into a loud chuckle. "Well, I'm sure the child deserves it," he says.

But for someone who says he thinks about death on a daily basis, Ungerer is not a dark person. In fact, his infectious humor and laugh are almost always present in the film.

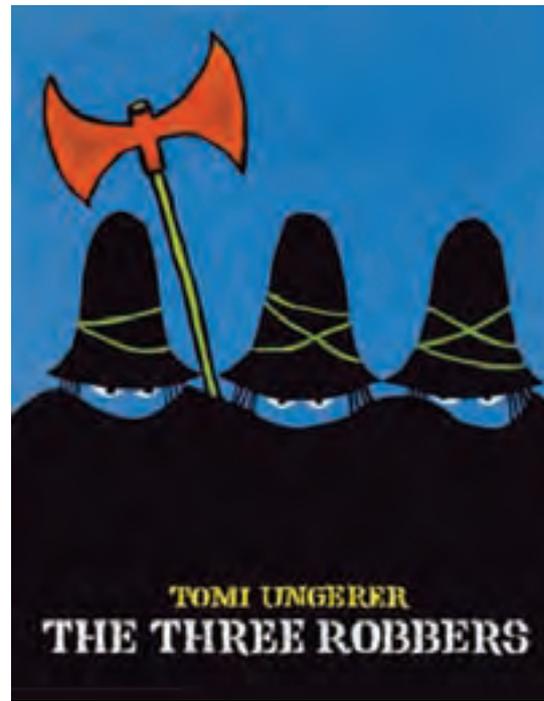
As the 1960s progressed, Ungerer grew disillusioned with the country he initially saw as liberating. He was particularly disgusted with the rampant racism he saw in the United States, comparing it to the brutal world he experienced under the Nazis.

There are graphic elements taken from Nazi propaganda posters in many of Ungerer's illustrations, especially as he moved into making more and more provocative political pieces. These were not well-received by the



Untitled (1970).

publishers of children's books. But it was the discovery that Ungerer was also producing adult erotica, some with explicit S&M imagery, that did him in for good with publishers.



Three Robbers (1962).

His books were banned from libraries and disappeared from bookstore shelves. Ungerer went into exile, first to Nova Scotia, then to an isolated region of Ireland, where he still lives.

But while his work — and, really, his philosophy — offended sensibilities on this side of the Atlantic, his children's books never went out of fashion in Europe, especially France and Germany. And now London-based Phaidon Press is bringing them back here, too.

His newfound popularity doesn't phase Ungerer. "Success is a mine field; it can easily blow up your head," he says in the film. Then, again with a laugh, he adds, "That's why you must be very, very careful not to take yourself too seriously."

Far Out Isn't Far Enough is part of the documentary competition at the Miami International Film Festival. It will be screened on Wednesday, March 6, at 9:30 p.m. at the Miami Beach Cinematheque (1130 Washington Ave.) and on Friday, March 8, at 7:15 p.m. at the Regal South Beach Cinema (1100 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach).

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www.bridgeredstudios.com
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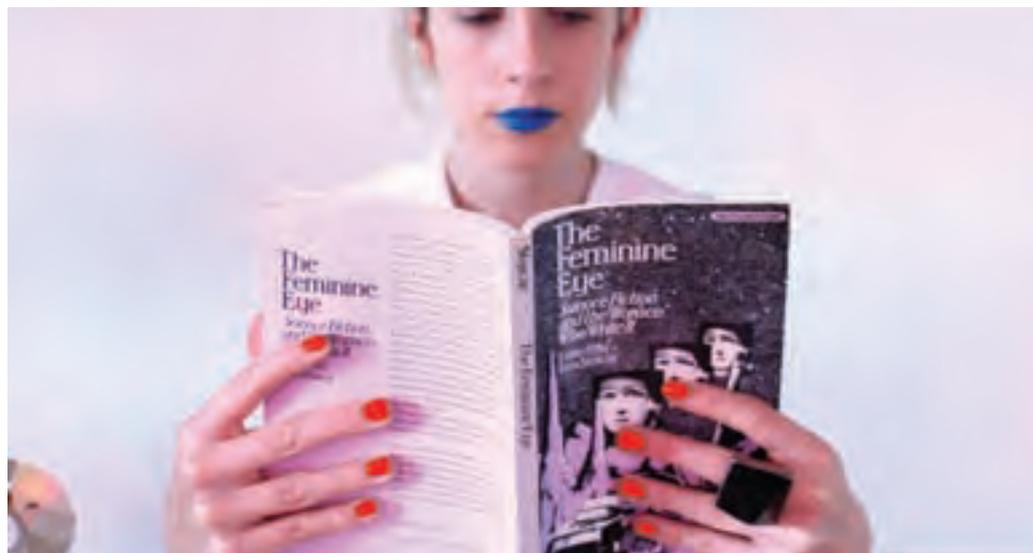
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Claire L. Evans, *How We Get Ready Now*, video, 2013, at Gallery Diet.

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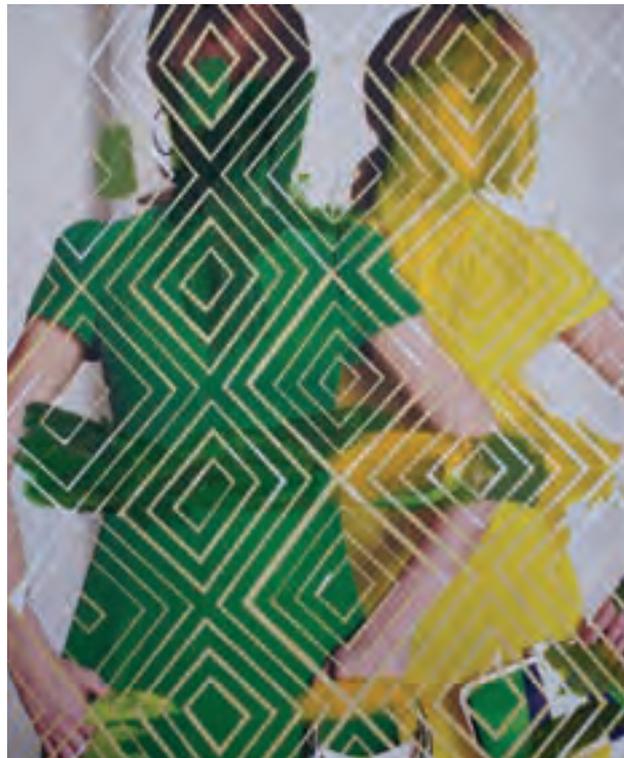
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Loriel Beltran, *Untitled*, oil on found poster on wood panel, 2012, at Miami Art Museum.

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Ongoing: Carlos Alfonso
March 9 through May 11:
"Terra non: Scoperta" by Alfredo Jaar
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Through May 19:
"The Seminole Paintings" by Eugene Savage
Through May 20:
"American Sculpture in the Tropics" with John Henry, Albert Paley, Dennis Oppenheim, Chakaia Booker, and Verina Baxter
Through June 23:
"Concealed Spaces" by José Manuel Ballester



Ged Quinn, *On Behalf of the Pharmakon*, oil on canvas, 2012, at Bass Museum of Art.

Through December 31:
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Through March 24:
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"New Light" by Stephen Knapp
Ongoing: Carlos Alfonso
March 9 through May 11:
"Terra non: Scoperta" by Alfredo Jaar
Reception March 9, 7 to 10 p.m.

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

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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 Nawy
March 14 through June 2:
"Frames of Reference: Latin American Art from the Jorge M. Perez Collection" with various artists

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
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"Liber Insularum" by Bill Viola
March 22 through May 5:
"Pivot Points: 15 Years and Counting" with various artists

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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

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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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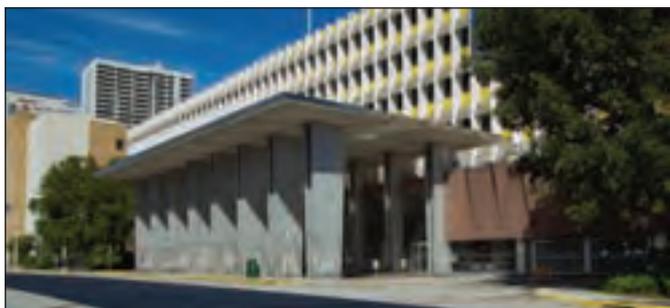
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Stop the Presses!

Oh, that much-maligned Miami Modern structure plopped downtown on Biscayne Bay. The Miami Herald building has been called a drab eyesore — and worse. But, oh, the stories that emanated from there, documenting some of the most important and dramatic periods in this city's history: the mass immigrations, the drug wars, the political scandals, the rise of South Beach. Now that the newspaper's staff is vacating and the building shutting its doors for good, it's a great time for

Hungry for History: Miami Herald Building, a one-time tour offered by HistoryMiami on Monday, March 4, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Cost is \$25. Call 305-375-1621 for reservations.

A Hike That's No Sweat

The **Greynolds Park: Creatures of the Night Hike** is rated "easy" because, well, you basically stop to stare at the moon and look closely at glow bugs. But while not athletically challenging, it's a fascinating trek through a unique natural habitat and the creatures that come out after dark. Led by guides from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on **Friday, March 8**, the hike costs only \$6. Meet at the Greynolds Park boathouse, 17530 W. Dixie Hwy., North Miami Beach. Call 305-944-6111.

A Sweet Afternoon

The South Beach Wine and Food Festival is not the only culinary fest on the block, by any means. The latest entry to the foodie scene? **The Miami Fine Chocolate and Food Show**, on **Saturday, March 9, and Sunday, March 10**, in Pinecrest Gardens (11000 SW 57th Ave.). From 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. visitors will be treated to chocolate and wine pairings, or cheese and beer ones, plus local selections from top chefs, served up by 80 vendors. There will be cooking demos, entertainment, and maybe most deliciously, samples of chocolate from across the globe. Cost is \$40 at the door. Go to www.miamifinefoodshow.com.

Not Your Abuelos' Cuban Music Fest

There likely isn't a better cultural fit for the new Miami than the **Global Cuba Fest**, which runs into April. Courtesy of FUNDarte and the Miami Light Project, this is no clichéd salsa extravaganza. The Cuban-born performers (some still based there, others elsewhere) will run through the gamut of styles. For instance, on **Saturday, March 9**, at 8:00 p.m., Havana-based songstress Ivette Cepeda will make her U.S. premiere at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium (2901 W. Flagler St., Miami). The Creole Choir of Cuba, descendants of Haitian immigrants, will perform on **Sunday, March 17**, at 7:00 p.m., at the North Beach Bandshell (7275 Collins Ave., Miami Beach). And the Deauville Hotel Jazz Club (6701 Collins Ave., Miami Beach) will host a number of jazz musicians, with traditional Cuban as well as contemporary roots. For a complete list of events, times, prices, and locations, go to www.fundarte.us.

Tales of a Nazi Hunter

After surviving concentration camps, Simon Wiesenthal dedicated his life to documenting the Holocaust and hunting down its perpetrators, Nazi war

criminals like Adolf Eichmann, Franz Stangl, and Dr. Josef Mengele. The one-man play **Wiesenthal: The Conscience of the Holocaust**, takes one small slice of this legendary life to tell the whole: The day of Wiesenthal's retirement, when he recounts to a group of students how he tried to right the wrongs of World War II. Playwright and star Tim Dugan brings his play to the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center from **Wednesday, March 13 through Sunday, March 17**, for both evening and matinee performances. Cost is \$36. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

Film Noir, Staged

South American theater has always had a reputation for the poetic avant-garde. The Chilean troupe Teatro Cinema keeps that tradition alive with **Sin Sangre** at the Colony Theater (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach) on **Friday, March 15 and Saturday, March 16**. Presented by MDC Live Arts, the production marks the debut of the company, which mixes live performance with film, revealing different levels of the inner and outer world that each discipline alone can't. This story is loosely a thriller, with film noir and B-movie undertones. Performances begin at 8:00 p.m. Cost is \$25;



That Big Drum Sound

Taiko drumming is an ancient percussion form from Japan, with some very distinct traits. The drums are large, some so large they require a standing drummer, who bangs the instruments vertically utilizing martial arts movements. In fact, Taiko drums were once used to rouse troops for battle, which is why hearing taiko can be a thunderous experience. Hear it for yourself, when the 24 members of the **Kodo** group return to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1300 Biscayne Blvd.) on **Saturday, March 9**, for their "One Earth Tour." Showtime is 8:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$30 to \$75. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.



A Most Awesome Fela!

The play **Fela!** is a hybrid of musical, drama, and dance, one that has left audiences breathless. Fela Kuti was a giant in Nigerian music (he's the father of the Afrobeat sound), politics, and life. In this performance, not only is his music re-created, but so are his famous, raucous nightclub and his incendiary exploits (both political and sexual), mixed in with some surreal moments from his and his mother's life. Directed by Bill T. Jones, the hit production takes the stage at the Ziff Ballet Opera House at the Arsht Center from **Tuesday, March 19 through Sunday, March 24**, with both evening and matinee performances. Tickets range from \$26 to \$56. For tickets and times, go to www.arshtcenter.org.

\$10 for MDC students. Go to www.mdclivearts.org.

Dance From the Native North

The Bessie Award-winning choreographer Emily Johnson, born in Alaska and based in Minneapolis, is set to heat up the stage here in Miami. For **Niicugni**, she is joined by choreographer and performer Aretha Aoki, with music from composer James Everest. This piece, inspired by Johnson's Alaskan-Indian heritage and presented by Tigertail Productions, is as much an installation as a dance. It comes to the Miami-Dade County Auditorium On-Stage Black Box (2901 W. Flagler St., Miami) on **Friday, March 22 and Saturday, March 23** at 8:30 p.m. General admission is \$30. Go to www.tigertail.org.

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

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

The Family That Steals Together, Stays Together

4700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

What better sight to see than a couple pushing a baby stroller, illustrating that cherished concept of family values? For some reason, the building they tried to enter was locked, so they patiently waited for someone to come out, thereby granting them access. The father led the way, trying to open locked doors, until he found one that was open. He then began stealing items, placing them inside the stroller. (Where else?) The family exited the building. Although no arrests have been made, there is video of the incident, which will be great for future family viewing in prison.

Shortsighted Thieves Won't Last Long

500 Block of NE 15th Street

With the future value of the dollar a mystery, some conspiracy theorists have suggested that everyday items will become exceedingly valuable, as people begin trading them for life essentials. That thought might make this victim feel better. A man returned home to find his house burglarized. Missing items included a sports championship ring, three mobile phones, a laundry card, and cash (soon to be useless). What had the thieves left behind? A comb. Sure, it may not seem very important *now*, but just wait, my friends. That comb might save your life.



Another Horn Dog Gets Rolled

900 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Oh, the male libido. This Casanova went to a bar and picked up two ladies. (This seems to happen every month.) Mr. Stud brought them back to his apartment and did what many in his position would do. He immediately fell asleep after the act. Apparently, he

is not the cuddling or talking type. When he woke up, several items, including expensive watches, were gone from his room. Yes, ladies are beginning to sense that there are opportunities available to them, beyond the usual wham, bam, thank you, ma'am. And it seems so easy: Men keep wanting, and women keep taking.

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A Minty Fresh Crime

700 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

Woman was in a nightclub and decided to pass out mints. She wanted to rid the club of the scourge of halitosis, perhaps because she was in close proximity to several dancing drunks. For reasons unknown, she put her purse down as she made her rounds. Naturally, someone took her purse. (Maybe they were looking for more mints?) Though the purse was recovered at the bar, its contents were missing. So we have another Miami example of someone reaching out to the community, only to be taken advantage of by her fellow citizens. Social workers can identify.

Deferred Auto Maintenance Results in Arrest

NE 4th Avenue and NE 6th Street

Police trailed a car that had one taillight out. After pulling over the driver, police observed a strong odor of marijuana coming from the car. When the police asked the driver if he had been puffing the magic dragon, the man admitted he had, but said it had been a while ago. It was then that the officer

noticed a bud in plain view. The man's defense was that it was from "earlier in the day" and begged not to be arrested. That little bud cost him a night in jail, a criminal record, and the obligatory mug shot on mugshots.com. It's still the case that officers will ruin your life for the green. Next time, fix that taillight.

Hulk Hogan Still Hanging Around Miami

100 Block of NE 54th Street

Man walked into Walgreens and began placing items into a bag. He made no attempt to pay as he passed the cash registers. Employees confronted him at the exit. The man, for reasons not immediately known, took off his shirt and said, "We are going to fight. If I win, I keep the items." Guess this was an impromptu match he had already planned in his mind and needed to look the part by baring his chest. He immediately struck one of the employees and then took flight, which, technically, would be considered a count-out in wrestling, resulting in his being disqualified. No arrests have been made.

Human Decency Takes Another Beating

400 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Man sat on a bus bench with his suitcase at his side. Another man fell in front of him, seemingly in a state of cardiac arrest. The man on the bus bench proceeded to help the man to his feet, at which point the heart attack victim pushed him to the ground, kicked him in the left leg, and took his phone and wallet. He also stole the suitcase. The victim, who had recently had hip surgery, could not give chase. Once again, this episode illustrates that, in Miami, the act of helping others is no longer possible. If you see someone needing aid, just run away (if you can).

Job Opening, Must Pass Background Check

1700 N. Bayshore Dr.

Times are tough and maybe your résumé is not the strongest, so you apply for a job as a front-desk security guard in a residential building. You get the job. What's one thing you probably shouldn't do? How about this: A brand-new laptop, purchased by one of the building's residents, was delivered to the building. Because

the resident was not home at the time, the aforementioned security guard signed for the laptop. But when the resident came to claim it, there was no trace of the laptop, save for an empty box left in a garbage can outside the building. Police asked the security guard if a certain car in the parking lot belonged to him. He said no. Police ran a check and confirmed it was his. Once challenged, the security guard admitted that, yes, the laptop was in his car. He was arrested and fired. Or fired, then arrested. We're not sure.

Intruder Leaves Paper Trail

700 Block NE 82nd Terrace

Victim just finished taking a shower. Exiting the shower, he found his computer desk ransacked, with papers strewn everywhere. Video surveillance revealed a man had entered the home and gone through victim's papers. This mystery man also ransacked the victim's car. Nothing was stolen, but the paper ruffling remains a bit of a mystery. Was it a jealous ex-lover, or maybe someone looking for unredeemed lottery tickets? Stay tuned for the next installment of Crime Beat.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Sands of Time

At Samson Oceanfront Park, modern Sunny Isles Beach gives way to old delights

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Old-school Miami Beach still exists north of hippidy-hoppin', tweet-friendly South Beach. Get on the bus, Gus, and travel back in time to some retro islands in the sun, where your grandmother's beach awaits you. Welcome to the self-proclaimed Florida's Riviera, Sunny Isles Beach.

Beaches here are hard to see as you approach from the land, what with all the Trump Towers towering and La Perlas shining, but at one point there's a break in the ramparts. You shuffle through a little park and toward the beach, where a cast of retro characters awaits you. The sweet old ladies in wheelchairs. The tourists with ghostly white skin. The babushkas in the sun.

Here the bubbes are reading their Russian newspapers, their chairs quite literally planted in the sand. About 30 elderly men and women have assembled themselves into two lines of folding chairs, facing each other, and are having lively discussions in a Slavic tongue. Their drinks are wrapped in beverage koozies, and they do not seem to be in a hurry. They own this beach.

Perhaps this scene is less old-school than at first glance, as this newer generation of retirees brings its own flavor to the art of relaxation, and its own culture of origin. You get the sense they have a regular pattern of arriving at the beach, drawing a line in the sand, and settling in for the long haul.

The beach serves them well at Samson Oceanside Park, and the park of 2.1 acres is noteworthy as the main public green space located directly on the beach in Sunny Isles Beach. The size of a one-block development, Samson Park, named after one of the city's leading families, delivers a delightful preamble to your day alongside the glistening Atlantic Ocean.

But there's one little problem, which will eventually be a huge one. The empty lot immediately north of the park is in the early stages of development. This is Sunny Isles Beach, so you know that means big — and very, very tall — real estate. With dozens of enormous towers casting huge afternoon shadows across more than a mile of beach, you have to wonder: Could this stretch of sand be America's most valuable beach? Certainly this little park has to be one of Florida's most valuable parcels of public land.



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

The park is beautifully maintained and very valuable, but the grass? Bad idea.

From the beach, the noise from construction is mostly drowned out by the wind and waves, but inside Samson Park, it can get ugly. You probably will not want to linger too long under the covered playground, as the constant drilling might make you batty. Do not look up, either, because only 20 feet away is a five-story drill and an 18-story red crane. The mature palm trees next to them look like geraniums.



Call it your grandmother's beach, with a Russian accent.

The new development will be called Chateau Beach Residences, and it had a groundbreaking ceremony in December 2012. Prices start somewhere around one million. With construction projected for two years, it should be ready by 2015. So poor little Samson Park is going to be dusty, as well as sandy, for a couple of more years.

The park has a few interesting elements that are worth a moment before you hit the beach. Near the street entrance stands a bronze statue of a family unit — a father, mother, and their two children — on a black pedestal. Behind them shines a flat disk with birds flying across the sun's rays. (Alternately, you could envision pigeons being impaled.) The stately statue makes the statement that families are welcome here, and indeed, you do find them on the beach, with or without grandparents.

Just a skip down the curving paved pathway, you encounter something completely different: a giant flamingo painted like an American flag. Alrighty, then.

The park's rest area is the most visually interesting and utilitarian feature, complete with restrooms and a bevy of shady, hexagonal picnic tables. The pale yellow complex in an Art Deco style appears to have been inspired by the Jetsons. It is all curves and no corners. The curvy ceiling is shaped like a giant, flattened kidney bean, with a large cutout circle near the bean's center framing the sky. Holding up the building are tilted turquoise poles that pierce the bean like toothpicks.

The bathrooms are adequate, as is the water fountain. Two functioning showers are at the entrance to the beach, and a third along the path is under construction.

The park's landscaping attractively features some native species, such as saw palmettos, and the dunes along the beach are covered with mature grasses.

SAMSON OCEANFRONT PARK

Park Rating

17425 Collins Ave.
Sunny Isles Beach
305-792-1706
Hours: Sunrise to sunset
Picnic tables: Yes
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: Yes
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: Yes
Swimming pool: No
Playground: Yes



Lest there be any doubt, this place is family-friendly.

The most obvious feature, though, is a bright green lawn that covers most of the park. My environmental bells are ringing, because a lawn this close to the ocean is completely unnatural and dependent on



Rising right next door is another sun-blocking skyscraper.

fertilizer that can easily leach into the sea.

On a positive note, this park hosts free morning yoga for adults on the beach. All you need to do is register with the city at Pelican Community Park. Call



The main attraction, of course, is the beach and ocean.

305-792-1706. The next session begins on March 6. (See you there?)

Getting to Samson Park by car could be problematic, as parking in the city is nonexistent on the beach side. But look just across the street, behind the drug store, and you will find public parking. Make a note of it.

The city staff members that maintain Samson Park impressed me during one of my visits, as they were cleaning everything

from the trashcans to the park's signage. Really, how often do you see someone cleaning *letters*? Kudos to them.

Samson Park is under a bit of stress right now, what with the construction next door, but it remains open for business. It was a wise investment for the city, and it will certainly help the future home values of the rising Chateau.

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Great Granny's Ghost

Is the spirit of our late, beloved pooch inhabiting our home?

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

I'm brushing my teeth when I hear the exclamation: "What did you do?" Though muffled by the buzz of my electric toothbrush, I sense distress in the voice and, since I'm usually the one who does the exclaiming around the house (and in general), I'm curious.

In the few seconds it takes me to pad over to the bedroom to investigate, I have a pretty good idea of what I'm going to see. I was right. Almost.

There's my husband, Jeremy, frowning while looking down at his side of

our bed. The covers are pulled back and, occupying the real estate where his butt usually rests during the night, is a single dollar bill.

My response comes through a toothpaste-rimmed grin: "I shidn't do shanything." Jeremy eyeballs me suspiciously, before looking back down at the bed. The man does not believe me.

I ask him if *he* put it there.

The uneasy eyeballs dart back at me. "No, I didn't," he answers.

Me: "Well, you moved it from the top of the bedspread."

Him: "No, I found it just like this."



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

This is a change in the usual Migrating Money pattern to which I've lately become accustomed.

Me: "The money was *under* the covers?"

Him: "Yes, it was sitting right there,"

Jeremy says, stabbing an accusatory finger at the bed.

"Well," I say. "Granny's back."

And with that, I shuffle back to the bathroom to spit out the minty

remnants of toothpaste.

Even though there is no rational explanation for a dollar bill migrating from the ironing board approximately two feet away from our bed to Jeremy's side of it, this has occurred a handful of times since our canine matriarch, Anise, aka "Granny," died on November 2. There is no air-conditioning or fan breeze to propel the dollar across the room, no

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Eddie, Aleksey, Mercedes & Ivan

other dogs in the room to move it, no draft from closing the door. There is no “normal” explanation.

But now, somehow, the dollar is *underneath* the covers, in approximately the same spot. While this spooked Jeremy, it made me happy. Well, it spooked me a bit, too, because, for the first time, it was under the covers and Jeremy had found it. What did that mean?

I know Granny — or rather, her spirit — is responsible. I know this because, through the use of my crystal pendulum, she told me so. The process of using a crystal pendulum to speak with the dead, called “dousing,” is a form of kinesiology. Simply put: You use your energy to channel another’s.

After Granny died, I would see her out of the corner of my eye. Then I noticed little pieces of fur appearing on the bed, on my side. Then the Money Migration started. The first time I noticed it, I was surprised, but figured a dog (we have four) had found it and brought it up to the bed. Except there was no dollar on the floor and, if there had been, my dogs would have eaten it. These incidents occurred during the day and I always discovered the dollar.

There are people out there who will dismiss this as a load of crap. That is their prerogative. I only believe things I personally experience, and I have experienced plenty of, er, otherworldly incidents. So I was happy, not disturbed, when this all began.

Any psychologist will tell you that the grief process will affect people deeply, so deeply that they may see or hear “things.” While this may or may not be true, it’s not happening to me. I’m dealing with the tangible: Objects moving, as opposed to optical or auditory observations.

I decided to speak to some experts to see what they thought about the pet afterlife.

One Ottawa-based psychic medium, Matthew Stapley, who hosts the television show *Psychic Insights with Matthew*, told me he has clients who have returned home to find a television set turned on in front of where a deceased pet used to sit. Stapley also said that, although his specialty is communication with people more than with animals, it is more common for animals to communicate after death than for people to do so.

Another psychic medium, New York-based William Constantine, who holds a doctorate in metaphysics from the University of Metaphysics in Arizona, also believes animals are more spiritual than people because they live in the moment and are not so concerned with thinking.

“Animals live from the heart, not from the mind,” Constantine says. “They could be the greatest teachers in the world, if we let them.”

What about Granny? Has she assumed the educator role from the other side? Um, no.

“Spirits do pretty much what they want,” Constantine says. “Their job is not to convince us.”

Well, I didn’t need convincing. Sometimes, though, a client may be so intent on communicating with a particular animal that they might miss messages from other spirits and, in the spirit world (as in the physical one), it seems the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Or as Constantine puts it: “The spirit who talks the loudest is the one who has the floor.”

This made me wonder if Stapley, who told me that an older human female

was trying to communicate with me, could be right. I had stopped dousing the other day when whoever was responding said they weren’t Granny.

One thing every psychic medium I consulted agrees on is that animals make themselves more available in the afterlife than humans do, and that energy is the link to all psychic connections. Terri Jay, a pet psychic and medium with 20 years’ experience, says she is able to communicate with the dead because of physics.

“Einstein and Tesla both wrote that everything is energy and everything has a vibration and frequency. All I do is pick up on vibrations and frequencies that other people miss,” Jay says. “Human beings and animals are 99-percent spiritual or energy beings in a one-percent physical body or meat suit. When we pass, the spirit and consciousness leave the body behind. But as the laws of physics tell us, you cannot destroy energy; you can only change it. Our consciousness and spirit (and that of our pets) continues on.”

Granny, it seems, is no exception.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Miami Amid Its First Boom

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the *BT*

Downtown Miami had changed dramatically when this photograph of 12th Street, today's Flagler Street, was taken in 1916.

The street was and would continue to be the main commercial street in Miami for five decades beyond that era. This photograph underlines the growing pervasiveness of automobiles, although if you look closely, you can see both bicycles, a favorite mode of transportation in earlier times, and a horse-drawn carriage.

On the far left side of the photograph (the north side of 12th Street) stands Budge's three story, iconic red brick hardware store and, in the distance, the turreted Halcyon Hall Hotel. On the right side is the Biscayne Hotel, and just beyond it the five-story Burdines Department Store, the city's first "skyscraper," also known as the "Big Store."

The city bus in the center of the photograph rambled west across the Miami River into the Riverside neighborhood, today's East Little Havana. Baseball was Miami's most popular sport in that era, and the bus carries the announcement of



Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, 1981-032-36

a baseball game that day.

Although Miami appeared sleepy and formal, in terms of its residents' attire at the time, the city was immersed in one of its earliest booms. Its population would rise in that decade from 5500 to nearly 30,000, the highest percentage of growth among American cities.

New suburbs north, south, and west of downtown would arise in that era.

America's involvement in World War I, which was just a year away for the country when this picture was taken,

would help transform portions of Miami and its hinterland into an armed forces camp. Indeed the era pictured here was perhaps the last time Miami could be characterized as quiescent, at least in the summers.

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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Stars in the Garden

Clerodendrums, with a little care, can bring a lot of color to your landscape

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

Driving through older Miami neighborhoods lately, I'm seeing in bloom a plant that has become quite common during the past decade or so. Starburst, or *Clerodendrum quadriloculare*, with its striking cantaloupe-size bunches of flowers against large green-on-top and purple-on-the-bottom leaves, catches your eye right away, especially when it reaches the size of a small tree.

This is one of a number of clerodendrum species that can be grown in our landscapes. Some species can grow into small trees like the starburst, some are shrubs, and there are also vines. The clumps of flowers (known as the inflorescence) on different species can be red, white, orange, or pink. Hundreds of species of clerodendrum are found throughout the tropics.

I've grown a variety of species over the years and most have very colorful, long-lasting inflorescences. The main drawback to growing clerodendrum, at least in my experience, is the aggressiveness of some species. A number of species send out root suckers and can fill a yard in only a few years.

As a group, they all seem to experience dieback in the winter or dry season, but this does not stop the root-suckering species from spreading into adjacent areas. (I have successfully grown and contained these plants in areas that were surrounded by concrete or some other

type of pavement.)

Another drawback to these plants is that some species set viable seeds. These are the blue-black fruit sometimes found among the flowers. The fruit are bird dispersed, so these species tend to become invasive. An interesting fact about clerodendrum is that they do not self-pollinate, which means insects or butterflies are doing the job on diurnal, or day-blooming, flowers; the white flowering plants are fragrant and get pollinated at night.

I once grew a very attractive white flowering species. This is the Chinese glory bower, *Clerodendrum philippinum*. It was one of the root-suckering species and would form dense clumps. Bridal veil, *Clerodendrum wallichii*, is another white-flowered shrub with pendulous flowers. It grows well in a container.

One of my favorite shrub species is the pagoda flower, *Clerodendrum paniculatum*. On well-grown plants, the long-lasting, red pagoda-shaped inflorescence can be more than a foot wide and a foot tall. It is a root-suckering species but is not too aggressive.

I once built a large, screened-in butterfly exhibit and grew many clerodendrum inside. I tried quite a few species of plants to see which would attract the captive native butterflies. One day I walked into the exhibit with a containerized glory flower, *Clerodendrum bungei*, and the purple flowers were immediately covered by butterflies. This was one of the most popular butterfly plants in the exhibit.



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

A local starburst plant in full bloom.

The glory flower is a root-suckering species, so be careful where you plant it. I also planted blue butterfly bush, *Clerodendrum ugandense*, in the exhibit, but because it has fewer flowers, it was visited less often by the butterflies.

The bleeding heart vine, *Clerodendrum thomsoniae*, is quite attractive. I have had it growing in my yard at home for years and have never worried about it getting out of control, since it never seems to grow more than 10 or 15 feet high and it dies back every winter. I have seen these grown successfully on trellises. This would be a great balcony plant.

One of the more common species to be found in South Florida is *Clerodendrum speciosissimum*. It is another suckering species with a red inflorescence that is very noticeable in the landscape. There also seems to be a bit of variation in the size and form of this species, so keep a look out for the best varieties (remembering to contain the roots).

When I used to grow large beds of clerodendrum, I would always cut them to the ground when they started to die

back in the winter. I would then place a few inches of mulch on the ground and plant bromeliads to add a bit of winter color. In spring, when the clerodendrum would begin to grow, I would remove the bromeliads to let the new plants grow up. This lent an interesting perspective to the garden.

I regularly cut my starburst plants down to the ground. This helps maintain them at a reasonable size. I have also seen them grown surrounded by lawns, so when the root suckers come up, they can be cut down easily by the lawn mower.

Remember, some of these plants can be invasive, but with a little common-sense gardening, they can add a lot of color to a garden.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Saving Our Seafood

For those of us who want to keep eating fish, wiser choices are necessary

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

The *New York Times* got it wrong last month when its editorial page stated the majority of fish consumed by humans would shift this year from wild-caught to farm-raised fish. The actual projection for that, according to a 2012 report by the United Nations, is 2018.

But what's a year or two among fish? For humans, an amazing threshold will be passed soon. When more fish are farmed than caught, for the first time no major source of animal protein will come from the wild. None. Catching your dinner will become obsolete. Hunting is so over.

We have become farmers of fish. (Actually, Asians farm it and we buy it.) This switch from wild to farmed fish tells us we can no longer depend on wild animals to feed the world, because fish were our last option. For today's appetites, there are simply not enough fish in the sea.

It sounds crazy, but it's true. Think about it: Why would any fishery waste money to raise fish when they can catch them for free? The quick answer is that all the easy, "free" fish have been decimated, and today boats have to search farther and deeper to extract those free-range fish. We have hunted fish, and we have "won." We beat the big whales long ago, and now we've beaten the little guys, too.

Why do we treat the ocean like a bottomless bank? Perhaps because it's the closest thing on earth to infinite, but the ocean has definite boundaries, and its creatures, a finite ability to replenish themselves.

For decades, overfishing has pummeled the sea, and today there's also climate change affecting the ocean. Add in pollution coming from land, such as fertilizers and sewage, and you have the 1-2-3 knockout. Overfishing, pow. Air pollution, bam. Runoff, fight over.

Even while the ocean is down for the count, we keep kicking it. Mangroves are disappearing at a rate faster than rainforests. Bluefin tuna, the majestic buffalo of the sea, is becoming extinct. Coral reefs are predicted to disappear this century, becoming the first lost ecosystem in recorded history.

We cannot let this happen. For starters, we cannot treat fish and other seafood as we have in the past. But instead of throwing up our hands in despair, we should make wiser choices: Learn what is happening in the ocean, think before we eat seafood, and limit ourselves to seafood from well-known, sustainable sources.

Just as you would never want to eat a tiger or a chimpanzee, you should never eat a shark. Do not eat at restaurants that serve shark. Tell your supermarket's fishmonger to stop selling it.

Good advice is available as a smartphone app or online from Seafood Choices, but the list of fish "not to eat"



can become quite long and confusing, so let me simplify things for you.

Go local. A local, farmed fish is probably a better choice than a wild fish from New Zealand. Also, think fresh water instead of salt water. Plenty of tilapia are swimming around in our canals and, by catching them, you are helping to remove an exotic species.

If you can't catch your own, buy direct from a boat or a fisher, or find a local seafood market. Some local seafood is available in grocery stores, but you have to search very carefully. Good local seafood choices include stone crabs and mahi-mahi. With a few exceptions, avoid snapper and grouper.

What about dining out for local seafood? Despite our location next to the third largest coral reef ecosystem in the world, local seafood in restaurants is hard to find. I'm not sure why, but my guess is that imported seafood is cheaper — for now. The hidden price is unsustainable harvests that eventually will cause those fisheries to go bankrupt, just like the defunct cod fishing industry in Canada.

A restaurant committed to local seafood would likely need to charge high prices and limit selection to local species and their availability: no salmon, no cod, and no cold-water fish, such as sea bass (which should be called the Patagonian toothfish).

Around town, a few restaurants double as fish markets, such as Captain Jim's in North Miami; Garcia's, on the Miami River near downtown; and La Camaronera in Little Havana, where you can get one of the best fish sandwiches in the area. The newest entry in this field is Fish Fish in North Miami, which utilizes its own seafood wholesale business in the Keys.

What is sustainable seafood? For the most part, it does not exist; if it did, populations would be able to sustain themselves at similar levels over time. Many fisheries today continue to decline, while those considered "sustainable" are mostly located far from Florida's shores. In a word, sustainable seafood is something very hard to find.

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When Our Little Angels Go Bad

A call from the principal's office often brings out the worst — and best — in parents

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

Brrrrriinnnggg... (This is your phone ringing.)
“Hello?”

“Mrs. Smith, this is Washington Elementary School. It seems as though your son had a disagreement with another child and reacted with violence.”

Silence.

“Mrs. Smith?”

“Um, are you sure it was little Johnny?”

“Quite sure, Mrs. Smith.”

If you haven't had a similar call yet, brace yourself.

Matilda, our sweet, violence-free, Girl Scout, friend-to-all-children bookworm was “involved in a disagreement with another child” last week. She reacted by scratching the other child.

The most fascinating part, to me, was how textbook I reacted. There were literally seven stages, almost like the grief cycle.

Shock: Are you sure it was her? I mean, they all wear uniforms — those kids all look alike!

Denial: Wait, Matilda bites her nails to the quick. There isn't much nail with which to make a wound. Come on, there's no way!

Anger: That kid is grounded! Wait... they had the *office assistant* call me? Where was the principal? My child is in the gifted program! I have questions!

This warrants more of a discussion!

Justification: The child with whom she had a disagreement was the daughter of one of our closest family friends. They have been raised almost like siblings. Sisters fight, right?

Depression: Where did we go wrong as parents? We don't condone violence; we don't even spank.

Guilt: Poor thing, she got called into the principal's office. We should not have reacted so strongly with her; she just needed to talk.

Acceptance: How can we be constructive about the fact that Matilda reacted without thinking first?

I was not a troublemaker when I was little. (My teen years were another story.) I did, however, get suspended when I was in the fourth grade.

Let me set the scene: My five-year-old brother and I were playing at the recreation center, next to the school. A couple of the rougher kids were telling secrets by the swings. Being that there were no other kids to hang with, we walked over and said, “Whatcha doin'?”

Their eyes lit up at the naive, fresh blood. They said, “Want some candy? Come with us!”

Next thing you know, my brother and I were holding a door open to a classroom at the school while the other kids were running out with armfuls of Fruit Roll-Ups.



We had no idea what was happening, but we walked home with sticky fingers — literally.

The next day my mother was called. I was given the sentence of a two-day suspension. No trial, no jury.

My mom stuck with the “anger” stage for a while. I was just happy that my baby brother didn't get suspended, too. A suspended kindergartener would have just been weird.

I learned guilt by association as a fourth grader. I also learned that aiding and abetting was a crime, even if you didn't understand what you were aiding or abetting.

The thing that still resonates with me from this experience was that I was labeled a “bad girl” for the year. Parents refused to let their kids invite me to birthday parties; they called the school to have their kids' seat moved away from mine in the classroom. The title didn't follow me into fifth grade since I was truly a bookworm and involved in every school activity imaginable, but it was a lesson that lasted long after the suspension and the punishments.

I don't want Matilda to have to learn like that. I don't want her to be the kid who starts every year in a new classroom without a clean slate because the word in the teachers' lounge is that she is a

“handful” or a “troublemaker.”

When she told me her side of the story, it would have been easy to say, “Well, clearly you were being bullied!” Or “Well, that other girl shouldn't have told your secrets to those other kids!”

When kids feel like victims, they act like victims. If something isn't fair, do the rules not apply?

Soon it becomes: “I got a D because the algebra teacher is a *beast!*” or “I didn't have the money for the bracelet, so I stole it.” We, as parents, unwittingly play into this idea, with our own dinner conversations often consisting of: “My boss isn't fair!” or “My client is just an idiot!”

What complicates matters is that there are situations in life which are truly unfair. But not all of them. In this case, we found it important to cut through the clutter and remove the victim mentality.

We look forward to the plethora of other excuses the future holds: “But those aren't *my* cigarettes; I was just holding them for Gretchen!” “That picture of me with the beer bong on Facebook isn't *me*. It's Gretchen. She was wearing my outfit!” (Yes, there was a Gretchen, but that's an entirely different story.)

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Cue the Chianti

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

Chianti is as American as apple pie. Oh, sure, it's technically Italian and named after its Tuscan region, one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world. Approximately 65 square miles between Florence and Siena, it's a gorgeous landscape of rolling hills and neatly ordered vineyards, olive groves and chestnut woods, big cities and small towns, Renaissance villas and ancient stone buildings.

Sounds about as American as Bashar al-Assad.

But if you've ever gobbled up a pizza or spaghetti and meatballs at that little Italian restaurant down the block, your favorite red-sauce joint, you probably washed it down with a glass of Chianti. It was likely a wine of modest price and equally modest virtue, its chief attributes being that it was red and wet.

It was all about tart fruit, soft tannins, and bracing acidity, a good foil for the onslaught of tomato sauce and garlic and sausage and cheese and olive oil. There was nothing fancy or pretentious about it, but it got the job done, and you went home with a full belly and a few pennies left over.

Now *that* sounds positively American.

It also sounds like an excellent reason to take another look at Chianti. After all, 1) inexpensive, 2) unpretentious, and 3) leaving you happily

satisfied are attributes as American as apple pie (and pizza and spaghetti and meatballs), too.

We begin on the lighter side, with the **2011 Cancellodel Barone**. This is your classic red-sauce joint Chianti — simple and straightforward, lively with tart berry fruit, a touch of spice, and the kind of acidity that can cut right through such hearty, cheesy, Italian-American staples as lasagna and eggplant Parmesan.

Fratelli d'Italia's 2011 Chianti offers a more nuanced flavor profile than the Cancellodel, kicking off with an aromatic mélange of red cherries, herbs, olives, and toast. It is light and puckery on the first sip. The second sip, too. But then it slowly opens, revealing more cherry-raspberry fruit and mellower acidity, so that when you've drained the first glass, it's starting to taste pretty good. It's also light-bodied enough to serve with chicken or seafood with tomato sauce.

In much the same vein is the **2011 Piccini Chianti**. Take a good whiff and you'll get red and black cherry fruit, a little plum, some cloves, and herbs and oak. You'll get those in the mouth, too, along with some dusky olive and tobacco notes and, again, the sort of stiff acidity that can take the edge off rich, fatty foods.

If this light- to medium-body, berry-fruit, high-acid business of the 2011 vintage is starting to sound like a tape loop, well, it just might be. Because all of that applies also to the **2011 Bellini**. With its royal red-purple color and hinted black

olive-spice aromas, it teases you into expecting something richer and duskier. But it follows the same taste pattern as the others, though halfway through the bottle, the wine smoothes out and gains some depth and heft.

The **2010 Oro** teases in a different way, promising bright cherry-berry fruit in the nose, but delivering tart, stingy fruit masked by earthy olive-leather flavors.

Now we come to a couple of wide-bodies. The **2011 Tenuta di Trecciano** is a much more fruit forward wine, from its scents of strawberry and raspberry to undercurrents of earth and tar. The fruit is richer, fuller, bigger in the mouth — not a lot of complexity, but a lot of satisfaction — yet still in balance with acid and tannins. I like the hints of cloves and white pepper, too, and though (at \$11.99) it's at the top of our price range, it's definitely worth the extra pennies.

Perhaps it's no surprise that my favorite wine of the tasting had two years on its competitors. The **2009 La Tancia Chianti** certainly acted the part, showing off aromas of ripe black cherries and plums that came alive in my mouth. Where the others were young and lean, the La Tancia was lush and elegant with a long, tangy finish. It has the finesse to pair with delicate

dishes, the weight to stand up to more robust ones, and the overall balance and structure to make it a pleasant pour all by itself.

With apple pie, though? Not so much.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



The Cancellodel Barone and Oro Chiantis are available at Lorenzo's Italian Center in North Miami Beach (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381) for \$9.99 each. The Fratelli d'Italia and Tenuta di Trecciano can be found at the North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) for \$7.99 and \$11.99, respectively. The North Miami Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463) offers the Piccini Chianti for \$8.97, while the North Miami ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) has the La Tancia for \$9.99.

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Don't Tread on My Chocolate!

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Last month the Center for Science in the Public Interest filed a 54-page petition with the Food and Drug Administration, citing many evil health problems linked to sugars, and asking the FDA to establish certain safe limits regarding sweeteners.

Perhaps coincidentally, three out of the five restaurants opening last month in BT territory were sweets shops. Or perhaps it was just Miami's way of saying, as we say to every attempt at regulation, from building codes to traffic lights: "Rules? We don't need no stinkin' rules!"

So take that, you sour-pussed meddlers. And pass me another triple-chocolate cupcake.

OPENINGS

Quarterman's Ice Cream Parlor (4 S. Miami Ave., 305-375-9595). This family-owned mom-and-pop shop looks like it was transported via time machine from a century ago, and makes its ice cream the old-fashioned way, too: using mostly locally sourced ingredients. Flavors change, but number nearly 30. Especially recommended flavor for any FDA honchos who happen to be visiting Miami: Garbage Can (vanilla ice cream packed with chunks from seven brand-name candy bars).

Sweet Saloon (7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-244-8331). It's 1:30 a.m. and Jacques Ardisson from long-lived

Upper Eastside Asian eatery Moon-chine knows just what you need to keep being the life of the party: a sugar rush. That's why he just opened this hidden "dessert bar & lounge" on the building's second floor, accessible only via a back stairway. A Café Liegeois (chocolate and vanilla ice cream sundae, heaped with whipped cream and chocolate coffee beans) should perk you right up, especially since it comes with a shot of espresso, too. The Anytime Sweet & Salty menu also has savory snacks that sound like eye-openers, such as Thai cheese burgers.

Bunnie Cakes (2322 NE 2nd Ave., 786-268-9790). Before opening her Wynwood bakery last month, Mari Cortez baked for numerous fancy parties, upscale restaurants, and local shops. So it's possible you've enjoyed her cakes, cupcakes, cookies, and doughnuts, and other sinful-tasting sweet treats without ever knowing that they're healthy — all totally vegan, sweetened mainly with agave cactus extract, and sometimes gluten-free, too. No butter, no eggs, no milk/cream, no refined sugar, no wheat flour, yet no sense of deprivation? Drop in and decide for yourself.

Ceviche Piano (140 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414). This is less a new opening and more a slight relocation (in the same downtown plaza) of Martini 28, and what owners Martin and Charo Villacorta, a married chef/pastry chef team, call a "refreshed concept." Most dramatic changes: an upscale in size and, as



the focal white piano signals, an upgrade in elegance. The menu has also been altered to be less all-over-the-globe; it's now more strongly focused on Peruvian cuisine. But some old favorite dishes remain (albeit slightly renamed), including a few inspired by Asia, and even one foray to the Deep South: a grilled double pork chop with Louisiana BBQ sauce.

Biscayne Diner (8601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-9910). Just opened (and open all day, from early morning to late night — thank you), this cool space serves All-American diner classics like meatloaf, plus a few international surprises, including a variety of Italian entrées. Featured are classic and alternative burgers (including a veg model); salads from a retro-American Chef's to a contemporary Caprese; hot and cold hoagies, some comforting (meatball, tuna melt), some refined (smoked turkey and brie); and *big* breakfasts for small prices.

CLOSINGS

Zen Sushi Lounge (1250 S. Miami Ave. #5) folded late in January. Soon to come in the Japanese spot's vacated space: Temaris, a Japanese/Latin fusion restaurant.

SIDE DISH

February's annual South Beach Wine & Food Festival is over, but don't fret if you're not feeling sufficiently full and fested.

The annual **Taste of Brickell Food & Wine Festival** is still to come. When: March 23-24, noon to 10:00 p.m. Where: the Miami Circle (401 Brickell Ave.).

Admittedly, the pig-out on our side of the pond isn't quite as swine-sized as the SBWFF's Grand Tasting, but it's growing. A one-day snack (with 16 participating restaurants and a crowd of 7000) in its inaugural year, 2011, the fest expanded to a two-day feast (with more than 50 restaurants and 12,000 visitors) in 2012.

This year's event is expected to attract 15,000. No TV-star chefs, but there's an exotic car show, live music, and other entertainment. And tickets are only \$10 (general admission) to \$125 and \$200 (one- and two-day VIP passes, including much free food and drink). Plus kids are welcome everywhere but the booze booths.

Hungry for more food news? See "BizBuzz," page 18. Send me your tips and alerts: restaurants@biscaynetimes.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 320.

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), Aijo 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 globtrotting 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 to 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 pintxos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

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

Bon Fromage
500 Brickell Ave. #106, 786-329-5632
Though independently owned instead of a chain cog, this cheese and wine café/shop is like a pint-size version of Midtown Miami's Cheese Course, right down to being officially self-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 butt tastes righteous -- no interfering glop, just hot sauce-spiked vinegar to balance the fab 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 you 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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL/DOWNTOWN

Bonding
638 S. Miami Ave., 786-409-4794
From trend-spotting restaurateur Bond Trisansi (originator of Mr. Yum and 2B Asian Bistro), this small spot draws a hip crowd with its affordable menu of redesigned traditional Thai dishes, wildly imaginative sushi makis, and unique signature Asian fusion small plates. Highlights include tastebud-tickling snapper carpaccio; an elegant nest of mee krob (sweet, crisp rice noodles); blessedly non-citrus-drenched tuna tataki, drizzled with spicy-sweet mayo and wasabi cream sauce; greed-inducing "bags of gold," deep-fried wonton beggar's purses with a shrimp/pork/mushroom/waterchestnut filling and tamarind sauce. \$\$

Top Burger
109 NE 1st St., 305-379-3100
Inside this "better burger" spot, décor is so charmingly 1950s retro you almost expect to find the Fonzy leaning on a jukebox. What you actually find: hand-formed, hormone-free, 100% Angus patties (or alternatives like veggie burgers, a lightly-breaded chicken Milanese, and all-beef hot dogs) on toasted buns, with fresh-cut French or sweet potato fries. Welcome surprises include an assertively spicy/tangy BBQ-like secret sauce; prices that, while not 1950s level, rival those at junkfood joints; and old-school service -- the kind that comes with a smile. \$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

B Sweet
20 NE 41st St., 305-918-4453
At this homey neighborhood jewel, located in a former apartment building, husband/wife team Tom Worhach and Karina Gimenez serve up warm welcomes and playfully inventive breakfast, lunch, and snack fare: bacon-wrapped egg and cheese cups; pressed Philly steak panini; an elegant yuzu-dressed smoked salmon, grapefruit, avocado, and arugula salad. But the must-eats are sweets, housemade by Worhach, formerly executive pastry chef at the Mansion at Turtle Creek and similar gourmet palaces. One bite of his decadent yet impossibly light white-and-dark chocolate mousse cake will hook you for life. \$\$\$

George's Kitchen & The Loft
3404 N. Miami Ave., 305-438-9199
Veteran Miami restaurateur George-Eric Farge raises the sophistication bar at his new two-story restaurant/lounge.

But the real star is Michelin-starred chef Steven Rojas, who combines French technique and personal creativity for dishes like Idiazabal cheese churros with romesco sauce, a green pea pot de crème "jar" with bacon marmalade (accompanied by butter-fried baguette slices for spreading), soy-glazed hamachi crudo with ginger gelee, and caper-sprinkled short rib tartare, the meat's richness cheekily upped by poached bone marrow and caviar. Brunch and lunch items are equally ingenious. \$\$\$

The Embassy
4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-8446
Don't come to this embassy for passports. The name is short for "Embassy of Well-being and Debauchery." You will, however, feel transported to Spain's gourmet capital, San Sebastian, after sampling ambassador Alan Hughes's cunning pintxos (complexly layered Basque-style tapas). From a self-serve bar, choose from a changing selection of skewered stacks; brie, homemade fig jam, and twizzles of silky jamon Serrano; roast tomato, goat cheese, and anchovies on buttery garlic toast; many more. Small plates, to-die-for desserts like floating island with lychees, and weekend brunch items demonstrate similar mad-chef skills. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Evio's Pizza & Grill
12600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-899-7699
Family-owned and operated, this indoor/outdoor pizzeria is also family-friendly, right down to the size of its NY-style pies (sold whole or by the slice), which range from large to roughly the diameter of a ferris wheel. And toppings, ranging from meat-lovers to veggie-loaded, are applied with awe-inspiring abundance. Since tastes do vary, the menu also includes a cornucopia of other crowd-pleasers: burgers (including turkey with a unique mustard-spiked cranberry sauce), entrée-size salads, burritos or quesadillas, wings, hot or cold subs and succulent self-basted lamb/beef gyros with tzatziki. \$

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Alba
17315 Collins Ave., 786-923-9305
From bad-boy celeb chef Ralph Pagano, Sole resort's seaside Italian/Italian-American eatery has an irreverent retro Rat Pack vibe and a menu featuring "naked ravioli" from the GnuDi Bar, fresh seafood, homemade pastas, classic and contemporary pizzas, and old school "red sauce joint" entrées, some upscaled. (When lobster Française is available, why settle for chicken?) Almond-sage butter-sauced butternut squash gnudi is a best bet. And meals end with another best bet: the "Viny D Split," a game enabling tables to win their meals for free. \$\$\$

health-conscious, the menu includes low-cal choices. For hedonists there's a big selection of artisan sakes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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

Chophouse Miami
300 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-938-9000
Formerly Manny's Steakhouse, Miami's Chophouse retains basically everything but the famed name (from the original Manny's in Minneapolis), and remains Miami's most intentionally masculine steakhouse. Here, ensconced in your black leather booth, everything is humongous: dry-aged choice-grade steaks like the Bludgeon of Beef (a boldly flavorful 40-ounce bone-in ribeye, described as "part meat, part weapon"); king crab legs that dwarf the plate; cocktail shrimp that could

swallow the Loch Ness monster whole; two-fisted cocktails that would fell a T-Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$\$

The Corner
1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-961-7887
With a Zuma alum in the kitchen, a Gigi 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 hangout. 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 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 Chihuahuah 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. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 Bould” – should be enough for foodies craving creative French/American comfort cuisine to run, not walk, to this restaurant. If they can find it. (Hint: The mysterious “Avenue of the Americas” is really Biscayne Boulevard Way. Don’t ask.) Downtown’s db is an absentee celeb chef outpost, but on-site kitchen wizard Jarrod Verbiak flawlessly executes dishes ranging from the original NYC db Bistro’s signature foie gras/short rib/black truffle-stuffed burger to local market-driven dishes like crusted pompano with garlic/parsley veloute. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Democratic Republic of Beer

255 NE 14th St., 305-372-4161

The food here? Beer is food! The DRB serves 400 beers from 55 countries, ranging from \$2 Pabst Blue Ribbon to \$40 Deus (an 11.5% alcohol Belgian *méthode Champenoise* brew). But for those favoring solid snacks, tasty global smallish plates include fried fresh zucchini with dip (cheese recommended); chorizo with homemade cilantro Mayo; or steak tacos, served Mexican-style with onions, cilantro, and spicy salsa. Sadly for breakfast-brew enthusiasts, the DRB isn’t open that early. But it is open late – till 5:00 a.m. \$\$

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: super-sized 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., 305-403-3103

From the stylish setting in Miami’s historic Firehouse No. 4, one would expect a mighty pricy meal. But entrées, which range from Nuevo Latino-style ginger/orange-glazed pork tenderloin to a platter of Kobe mini-burgers, all cost either \$18 or \$23. And the price includes an appetizer – no low-rent crapola, either, but treats like Serrano ham 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 restorolounges, the “resto” part often gets the short end of the stick. But not at this chic but friendly spot, where Gerardo Barrera, an alumn 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 piguillo sauce stripes and salad; lobster corn soup packed with sweet lobster meat; more) and a farm-to-table produce emphasis make this one steakhouse where those who don’t eat beef have no beef. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Elwoods Gastro Pub

188 NE 3rd Ave., 305-358-5222

Cordial English owners, classic rock music (sometimes live),

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

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 tables and lounge chairs where it’s easy to while away many happy hours. The menu is the same array of bar bites served by South Beach’s old Finnegan’s, but angus burgers are big and tasty, and ziny jalapeño-studded smoked-fish dip is a satisfying table-snack choice. \$\$

First Hong Kong Café

117 SE 2nd St., 305-808-6665

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

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

Jackson Soul Food

950 NW 3rd Ave., 305-377-6710]

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

Jamón, Jamón, Jamón

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

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

Kork Wine & Cheese Bar

2 S. Miami Ave., 305-377-8899

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

Largo Bar & Grill

401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706

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

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800

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

La Moon

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

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

La Provence

1064 Brickell Ave. 786-425-9003

Great baguettes in the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it’s likely not from a restaurant’s own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery’s café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Niçoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau’s Provençal homeland. \$\$

La Sandwicherie

34 SW 8th St., 305-374-9852

This second location of the open-air diner that is South Beach’s favorite après-club eatery (since 1988) closes earlier (midnight Sunday-Thursday, 5:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday),



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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., 305-372-233
At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$-\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

1 W. Flagler St., Suite 7, 305-789-9929
(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing.)

Little Lotus

25 N. Miami Ave. #107, 305-533-2700
Secreted inside the International Jewelry Exchange, this eatery (owned by stealth super-foodie Sari Maharani – paralegal by day, restaurateur by night) is tough to find but seems destined to become one of our town's toughest tables to book. Two talented chefs, whose credits include Morimoto (NYC) and hometown fave Yakko-san, create Japanese, Indonesian, and fusion small plates that look remarkably artful and taste like they're about ready to take on Iron Chef Morimoto himself. Saucing, often with multiple but balanced portions, is especially noteworthy. The prices? A steal. \$-\$\$

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.

Martini 28

146 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414
This stylish little lunch-only spot, a labor of love from a husband-wife chef team, serves what might well be the most impressive meal deal in town. From an ambitious, daily-changing menu of fare that's geographically eclectic but prepared with solid classic technique, diners get a choice of about ten entrées (substantial stuff like steak au poivre with Madeira cream sauce and roasted potatoes, or pignolia-crusted salmon with Dijon mustard sauce, potatoes, and veggies), plus soup or salad and housemade dessert. For just \$9.99. Told ya. \$

Miami Art Café

364 SE 1st St., 305-374-5117
For businessfolk on the go, this breakfast/lunch-only French café serves up evocative baguette sandwiches (like camembert) loaded, if you like, with greens, olives, and more. For those with time to sit, we'd recommend the savory crêpes, garnished with perfectly dressed salad, or sweet crêpe like the Bonne Maman (whose sugar/salted butter stuffing brings Brittany to downtown). And quiches are nicely custardy. But there are surprises here, too, including just a few full entrées, with correctly made traditional sauces one wouldn't expect at a luncheonette – except, perhaps, in Paris. \$-\$\$

Miami's Finest Caribbean Restaurant

236 NE 1st Ave., 305-381-9254
Originally from Jamaica, proprietor Miss Pat has been serving her traditional homemade island specialties to downtown office workers and college students since the early 1990s. Most popular item here might be the weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

Mint Leaf

1063 SE 1st Ave., 305-358-5050
Part of London's famous Woodlands Group, this stylish spot, like its Coral Gables parent, serves the sort of upscale Indian food rarely found outside Great Britain or India. More interestingly, the menu includes not just the familiar northern Indian "Mughlai" fare served in most of America's Indian restaurants, but 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. \$\$\$

Neoe

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 luxurious. \$\$\$

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

Novocentro

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900
For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$-\$\$\$

Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862
With a dozen branches nationwide, Oceanaire may seem more All-American seafood empire than Florida fish shack, but menus vary significantly according to regional tastes and fish. Here in Miami, chef Sean Bernal supplements signature starters like lump crab cakes with his own lightly marinated, Peruvian-style grouper ceviche. The daily-changing, 15-20 specimen seafood selection includes local fish seldom seen on local menus: pompano, parrot fish, amberjack. But even flown-in fish (and the raw bar's cold-water oysters) are ultra-fresh. \$\$\$

OTC

1250 S. Miami Ave. 305-374-4612
Over-the-counter service usually connotes the classic fast food "slider" experience: both greasburgers and patrons are in and out quickly. At this casually cool gastropub, the counter ordering system encourages the opposite feel, of comfie 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
Since its 1958 invention, conveyor-belt sushi has been the most fun form of Japanese fast food, but problematic. Who knew how long plates had been circulating on the sushi-ground? Happily, this sushi-boat spot avoids sanitation issues with clear plastic covers, and as for freshness, low prices ensure a steady stream of diners grabbing makis, nigiri, and more as they float by. Highlights include glistening ikura (salmon roe) in a thin-sliced cucumber cup, a sweet-sauced mango/guava/crab roll, and a festively frosted strawberry Nutella dessert maki. \$-\$\$

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 fiocchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) – featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more – remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

Pieducks

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-808-7888
If you can overlook a name as unenlightening as most in-jokes (it evidently refers to a favorite character of owner Claudio Nunes's kids – we assume the Pokemon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-blistered crusts, crisp outside and airy/chewy inside, but that's what you'll consistently find here and a new 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 causas, combining Peru's favorite starch, potatoes, with unique new sauces. \$\$

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

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. \$

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 Arshet Center
1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722
Though the opening of Barton G.'s elegant performing arts center eatery did feature a live grille, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarragon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

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. \$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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

The River Oyster Bar

650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked – fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001

This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that's haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn't fear; though nachos aren't available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between freshly made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-habanero-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa's signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

Scalina

315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-789-9933

Comparisons between this new Tom Billante venture and the other (slightly pricier) Italian eatery in the same building are inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC's Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo's specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice's famed fegato (calf's liver and onions), upscaled with Lucanica sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tartufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

Soya & Pomodoro

120 NE 1st St., 305-381-9511

Life is complicated. Food should be simple. That's owner Armando Alfano's philosophy, which is stated above the entry to his atmospheric downtown eatery. And since it's also the formula for the truest traditional Italian food (Alfano hails from Pompeii), it's fitting that the menu is dominated by

authentically straightforward yet sophisticated Italian entrées. There are salads and sandwiches, too. The most enjoyable place to dine is the secret, open-air courtyard. Alfano serves dinner on Thursdays only to accompany local musicians and artists. \$\$\$

Sparky's Roadside Restaurant & Bar

204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877

This cowboy-cute eatery's chefs/owners (one CIA-trained, both BBQ fanatics nicknamed Sparky) eschew regional purism, instead utilizing a hickory/apple-wood-stoked rotisserie smoker to turn out their personalized style of slow-cooked, complexly dry-rub fusion: ribs, chopped pork, brisket, and chicken. Diners can customize their orders with mix-and-match housemade sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired vinegar/mustard, pan-Asian hoisin with lemongrass and ginger, tropical guava/habanero. Authenticity aside, the quality of the food is as good as much higher-priced barbecue outfits. \$\$\$

Sushi Maki

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-415-9779

Fans of the popular parent Sushi Maki in the Gables will find many familiar favorites on this Brickell branch's menu. But the must-haves are some inventive new dishes introduced to honor the eatery's tenth anniversary – and Miami multiculturalism: "sushi tacos" (fried gyoza skins with fusion fillings like raw salmon, miso, chili-garlic sauce, and sour cream), three tasty flash-marinated Asian/Latin tiraditos; addictive rock shrimp tempura with creamy/spicy dip. Also irresistible: four festive new sake cocktails. \$\$\$

SuViche

49 SW 11th St., 305-960-7097

This small Japanese-Peruvian place serves food influenced by each nation distinctly, plus intriguing fusion items with added Caribbean touches. Cooked entrées, all Peruvian, include an elegant aji de gallina (walnut-garnished chicken and potatoes in peppery cream sauce). But the emphasis is on contemporary ceviches/tiraditos (those with velvety aji amarillo chili sauce particularly), plus huge exotic sushi rolls, which get pretty wild. When was the last time you encountered a tempura-battered tuna, avocado, and scallion maki topped with Peru's traditional potato garnish, huancaina cheese sauce? \$\$\$

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 Bould'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 swellegant, 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 hang-out, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistrolounge." The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-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 'n' gawt for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

Compared to other restaurants with such an upscale power-lunch/dinner setting, most prices are quite affordable here, especially if you stick to the Miami Spice-priced date-dinner menu, or happy hour, when seafood items like crab-cake

"sliders" are half price. Most impressive, though, are seasonal stone crabs from Truluck's own fisheries, and way less expensive than Joe's and other seafood that, during several visits, never tasted less than impeccably fresh, plus that greatest of Miami restaurant rarities: informed and gracious service. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tuyo

415 NE 2nd St., 305-237-3200

Atop the revolutionary Miami Culinary Institute, this upscale eatery, unlike the café downstairs, isn't student-run. Rather it's designed to showcase school ideals – including sustainability as well as definitive Miami cuisine. The changing menu, from a culinary Dream Team headed by "New World Cuisine" inventor/MCI instructor Norman Van Aken (plus former protégés Jeffrey Brana and Travis Starwalt), mixes citrus-inflected creamy conch chowder and other pioneering signatures with new inventions like mind-reelingly multidimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and bursting ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$

Waxy O'Connor's

690 SW 1st Ct., 786-871-7660

While the menu of this casually *crail* (Gaelic for "fun") Irish pub will be familiar to fans of the South Beach Waxy's, the location is far superior – on the Miami River, with waterfront deck. And none of Miami's Irish eateries offers as much authentic traditional fare. Especially evocative: imported oak-smoked Irish salmon with housemade brown bread; puff-pastry-wrapped Irish sausage rolls; lunchtime's imported Irish bacon or banger "butty" sandwiches on crusty baguettes, served with hand-cut fries, the latter particularly terrific dipped in Waxy's curry sauce. \$\$\$

Wok Town

119 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9993

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo Japonese veteran) may initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proof: a startlingly savory miso beef salad, with sesame/ginger/scallion dressing. Bubble tea, too! \$\$\$

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

This Miami River restolounge has a London parent on San Pellegrino's list of the world's best restaurants, and a similar menu of world-class, izakaya-style smallish plates (robata-grilled items, sushi, much more) meant for sharing over drinks. Suffice to say that it would take maybe a dozen visits to work your way through the voluminous menu, which offers ample temptations for vegetarians as well as carnivores. Our favorite is the melt-in-your-mouth pork belly with yuzu/mustard miso dip, but even the exquisitely-garnished tofu rocks. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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, fatly filled with mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, and fresh tomatoes). Hefty half-pound burgers come similarly stuffed rather than topped. A sheltered patio and full bar make the place a pleasant neighborhood lounge, too. \$\$

Bin No. 18

1800 Biscayne Blvd., 786-235-7575

At this wine bar/café, the décor is a stylish mix of contemporary (high loft ceilings) and Old World (tables made from wine barrels). Cuisine is similarly geared to the area's smart new residents: creative sandwiches and salads at lunch, tapas and larger internationally themed Spanish, Italian, or French charcuterie platters at night. Though the place is small and family-run friendly, chef Alfredo Patino offers sophisticated snacks like the figciutto: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$

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 discernible binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373

Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd. 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emmeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust pizza topped with duck confit, wild mushrooms, port wine syrup, and subtly truffled béchamel; crispy calamari (rings and legs) with light, lemony tomato emulsion; and tuna tartar that is refreshingly free of sesame oil. Big portions and a full bar to boot. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Cheese Course

3451 NE 1st Ave. 786-220-6681

Not so much a restaurant as an artisanal cheese shop with complimentary prepared foods, this place's self-service café component nevertheless became an instant hit. Impeccable ingredients and inspired combinations make even the simplest salads and sandwiches unique — like bacon and egg, elevated by hand-crafted cream cheese, roasted red peppers, avocado, and chipotle Mayo. Cheese platters are exceptional, and customized for flavor preference from mild to bold, and accompanied by appropriate fruits, veggies, nuts, olives, prepared spreads, and breads. \$\$

Clive's Café

2818 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-0277

Some still come for the inexpensive, hearty American breakfasts and lunches that this homey hole-in-the-wall has served for more than 30 years. Since about 1990, though, when owner Pearlina Murray (“Ms. Pearl”) to regulars and cook Gloria Chin began emphasizing their native Jamaican specialties, the intensely spiced grilled jerk chicken has been the main item here. Other favorites: savory rice and pigeon peas; eye-opening onion/vinegar-flavored escovitch fish; sweet plantains; and cabbage that redefines the vegetable. \$

Crumb on Parchment

3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-572-9444

Though located in a difficult spot (the Melin Building's central atrium, invisible from the street), Michelle Bernstein's bakery/café packs 'em in, partly due to Bernstein's mom Martha, who makes irresistible old-school cakes: German chocolate with walnuts, lemon curd with buttercream frosting, more. Lunch fare includes inspired sandwiches like seared rare tuna with spicy Asian pickles and kimchi aioli. And for morning people, the savory chicken sausage, melted cheddar, kale, and shallot sandwich on challah will convince you that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. \$\$\$

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar — sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks — a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

El Bajareque

278 NW 36th St., 305-576-5170

Dozens of little Latin American eateries, all looking almost

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 mofongo, a plantain/chicharron mash with varied toppings plus garlicky mojo. Housemade snacks are irresistible, too, and great take-out party fare: pork-studded pasteles, similar to Cuban tamales 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 pillowy-light roast pork-stuffed buns, and possibly the world's best BLT, featuring Asian bun "toast," thick pork belly slices rather than bacon, and housemade pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$-\$\$

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 organic 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/yucafied ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café 4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463
Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salads are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor 3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

Lost & Found Saloon 185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008

There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crust salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Mandolin Aegean Bistro 4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066

Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's "piadenas," 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 fatly-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde -- a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$-\$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink 130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$-\$\$\$

Ming Yuan 3006 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-6466

What this tiny (three booths plus counter seats) Wynwood place serves isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. It's Chinese immigrant cooking: America's original Cantonese-based chop sueys and egg foo youngs plus later, spicier but also Americanized Szechuan/Hunan-inspired 1970s inventions like Mongolian beef and General Tso's this-or-that. But all the above (ordered extra-spicy if you like heat), plus crab rangoons and treat-packed special fried rice, are truly tasty. And since almost everything on the menu comes in several sizes, with even "small" being substantial, prices are unbeatable. \$\$

Mike's at Venetia 555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$-\$\$

Morgans Restaurant 28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but *ultimate* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring fries that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crust and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" -- definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar 1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000

At NoVe, the restolounge on 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 bahn 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 topped \$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, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced pork 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. \$\$\$

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. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 housemade 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 Amar 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 vegetables, savory soup to finish. \$-\$-\$-\$

Vintage Liquor & Wine Bar

3301 NE 1st Ave. #105, 305-514-0307

Genitified 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 pastéis 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 Grandé 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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired "pig wings" (pork dummettes 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. \$\$\$

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

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

choi, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Magnum Lounge

709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restolounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make — in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites — organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamma produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also carves out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$

Namaste

7420 Biscayne Blvd., 786-536-9050

With food served from steam-table-type stations, plus plastic utensils and plates, this neighborhood Indian place is definitely no frills. But it's also excellent value for the money, especially if you go for the all-day \$8.99 special, which includes two entrée items plus sides for which most Indian restaurants charge extra: rice, choice of bread (garlic naan recommended), and refreshing raita. Invest some of your savings in BhelPapri chat, a savory snack featuring

crisp chips topped with cilantro-spiked chickpeas, onions, potatoes, yogurt, and piquant tamarind sauce. \$\$\$

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. Caffe & 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 pill at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlickwurst) 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 some what 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 (siriracha 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 restolounge, 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 focchio 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using homemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry's in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global 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 raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Oggi Caffe

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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, 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, ajicó, 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

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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 flocchi rapera (pear/cheese-filled pasta purses with truffled prosciutto cream sauce), an unlikely (soy sauce and parmesan cheese?) but luscious Italian/Japanese fusion tuna carpaccio, and fresh-fruit sorbets. But traditionalists needn't worry. All the old favorites, from the café's famed beef carpaccio to eggplant parm and pastas sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence, are still here and still satisfying. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

K'Chapas 1130 Normandy Dr., 305-864-8872

Formerly the Peruvian restaurant Pachamama, this space is now both Peruvian and Venezuelan – but not fusion. The Venezuelan sisters who run the place keep dishes true to country. Most Big Food comes from Peru: fresh ceviches, classic cooked entrées. But it's the Venezuelan breakfast/snack items that keep us coming, especially signature cachapas, somewhat similar to arepas but harder to find in restaurants. These moist pancakes, made from ground corn kernels instead of just corn meal, are folded over salty white cheese for a uniquely bold balance of sweetness and savor. \$\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden 7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879

"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands – none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several housemade sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious, authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Wine Market 908 71st St., 305-865-6465

This rustic-chic wine shop, tapas bar, and restaurant is the sort of place that every emerging neighborhood needs. The wine stock isn't huge but the selection is thoughtful, with many bottles priced from \$10 to \$20. Take it home or pay a small corkage fee and drink on-premises over a meal centered on typical Parisian bistro entrées like steak or moules frites (the latter regularly available all-you-can-eat). If you'd prefer going the tapas bar route, highlights include a silky cognac/truffle chicken liver mousse and battered shrimp with remoulade sauce to make your own po'boy crostinis. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet 9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012

If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$\$

Iron Sushi 9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311

With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambience. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club 10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363

Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public – always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambience is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food – some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$

PizzaFiore 9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1242

Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crust, oozing-with-goey-cheese pizzas reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings – sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co. 13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254

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

Bagel Bar East 1990 NE 123rd St., 305-895-7022

Crusty outside (even without toasting) and substantially chewy inside, the bagels here are the sort homesick ex-New Yorkers always moan are impossible to find in Miami. For those who prefer puffed-up, pillow bagels? Forget it. Have a nice onion pocket. There's also a full menu of authentic Jewish deli specialties, including especially delicious, custom-cut – not pre-sliced – nova or lox. Super size sandwiches easily serve two, and they'll even improvise a real NJ Sloppy Joe (two meats, Swiss, coleslaw, and Russian dressing on rye) if you ask nice. \$\$\$

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 hock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut. Costs are comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Cane à Sucre 899 NE 125th St., 305-891-0123

From the Vega brothers (who pioneered the Design and MiMo districts with, respectively, the original Cane A Sucre and UVA 69), this charming artisanal sandwich bar is the perfect breakfast/lunch stop before or after ingesting visual arts at nearby MOMA. Actually, creations like El Fig (fig confit, gorgonzola cheese, walnuts, and honey on an authentically French crisp-crust fresh-baked baguette) are art in their own right. Inventive, substantial salads, sides, daily soups, and homemade sweets (including mouthwateringly buttery croissants) complete the menu. \$\$\$

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. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

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)

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

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

Monday.....\$4.95	
3 Eggs any style served with Homefries or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	
Tuesday.....\$7.99	
Bacon Omelette served with Homefries or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	
Wednesday.....\$8.50	
Eggwhite Vegetable Omelette served with sliced Tomatoes or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	
Thursday.....\$8.99	
Short Stack Pancakes, 2 Eggs, 3 strips of Bacon or 2 Sausage Links.	
Friday.....\$9.50	
Nova, Eggs and Onions with Homefries or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 ajiao. 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 road-house ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissonne's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle bistro fare: frisée salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon vinaigrette; truite Grenobloise (trout with lemon/caper sauce); consommé with black truffles and foie gras, covered by a buttery puff pastry dome; perfect pommes frites, and equally perfect apple or lemon tarts for dessert. \$\$\$

Rice House of Kabob

14480 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-4899

Since 2006, South Beach's original Rice House has been serving up mountainous platters of basmati rice and Greek salad topped with Persian-style marinated/char-grilled meat, poultry, seafood, or veggie kabobs – for very little money. This branch of what is now a growing chain has the same menu (which also features wraps, for lighter eaters) and the same policy of custom-cooking kabobs, so expect fresh, not fast, food. Sides of must-o-keyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

Smashburger

14730 Biscayne Blvd., 786-406-6614

Two things distinguish the griddled patties of this Denver-based chain, touted as "the nation's fastest-growing 'better burger' restaurant," from other better burgers: a nod to local tastes (like toppings of fried chorizo and potato fritas), and the smashing technique, producing an appealing thickly

crusted exterior. Got burger overkill? Substitute chicken, or have a salad. An added draw: unusual veggie sides, which go beyond regular and sweet potato fries to crisp onion strings, "veggie frittes" (carrots, string beans), and an Old South fish-camp classic: fried pickles. \$\$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

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 savor 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., 305-891-4313

The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp chop suey, or salty pepper shrimp (authentically shell-on). And New Yorkers will find a number of dishes that are mainstays of Manhattan Szechuan menus but not common in Miami: cold sesame noodles, Hunan chicken, twice-cooked pork. \$\$

Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451

The griddle has been fired up since 1954 at this 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 cheese steak, 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

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 fillings stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Tops among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garlicked crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft encountered in town. \$\$-\$

Christine's Roti Shop

16721 NE 6th Ave., 305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouvela, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill

**Intracoastal Mall
3969 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124**

Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy's, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crusted fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy's different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$\$\$-\$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY

**3427 NE 163rd St.,
305-949-3318**

In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don't worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire's Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you'll be a happy camper, especially if you're an ex-New Yorker. \$\$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$

Ginza Japanese Buffet

16153 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-2192

Highlighting the lunch and dinners spreads at this all-you-can-eat Japanese buffet are a hibachi station (where chefs custom-cook diners' choice of seafood or meat), plus many types of maki rolls and individual nigiri sushi, both featuring a larger variety of seafood than at many sushi bars – not just salmon and tuna but snapper, escolar, surf clam, snow crab, and more. But there are also steam-tabled hot Japanese and Chinese dishes: an array of cold shellfish and salads with mix-and-match sauces; and desserts. Selections vary, but value-for-money is a given. \$\$

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, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$-\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant

3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsha

1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsha curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaisa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$-\$

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. \$\$

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Kebab Indian Restaurant

514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an atmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$\$

Kings County Pizza

16228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino's flopsy-crusteds, ketchupy, cheese-floppy 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 Totono'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, cones 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 oil); finish with fruits and cakes dipped in melted chocolate. Fondue etiquette dictates that diners who drop a skewer in the pot must kiss all other table companions, so go with those you love. \$\$\$

New China Buffet

940 North Miami Beach Blvd., 305-957-7266

The venue (a former Bennigan's) is clean, casual, and not kitschy. The all-you-can-eat fare is voluminous – scores of Chinese dishes (recommended: Mongolian pork, spicy garlic shrimp, and surprisingly authentic steamed fish with ginger and scallion); international oddities (pizza, plantains, pigs-in-blankets); plus sushi, salad, and pastry/ice cream bars. And the price is sure right. Lunch is \$6.75 (\$7.75 Saturday and Sunday). Dinner features more seafood, \$9.55. There's an inexpensive take-out option, too, and reduced kids' prices. \$

Oishi Thai

14841 Biscayne Blvd.,

305-947-4338

At this stylish Thai/sushi spot, try the menu of specials, many of which clearly reflect the young chef's fanatical devotion to fresh fish, as well as the time he spent in the kitchen of Knob: broiled miso-marinated black cod; rock shrimp tempura with creamy sauce; even Nobu Matsuhisa's "new style sashimi" (slightly surface-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd.,

305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Racks Soprano Café & Italian Restaurant

3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-917-7225

Racks has a new owner and a new name. Italian chef Rocco Soprano is bringing his authentic Italian flavors and style to a lovely setting. We'll have more details next month, but we know the specialties include Italian steaks, seafood, and an oyster bar. One thing that won't change: the coal-fired pizza oven, which reliably turns out an astonishingly light yet chewy crust that makes the pies a revelation. Especially enjoyable is the waterfront deck. \$\$

Roasters & Toasters

18515 NE 18th Ave.,

305-830-3354

Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really 1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

Sang's Chinese Restaurant

1925 NE 163rd St., 305-947-7076

Sang's has three menus. The pink menu is Americanized Chinese food, from chop suey to honey garlic chicken. The white menu permits the chef to show off his authentic Chinese fare: salt and pepper prawns, rich beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Isee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-654-4008

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$-\$\$

Slices Pizza & Pasta

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5684

While pizza by the slice is common street food in every city in the USA, this informal Italian eatery offers a variation particularly appropriate to Latin American-influenced Miami: slices served rodizio-style. Brazil's traditional rodizio restaurants feature many different grilled meats, served tableside by a continuing parade of waiters till diners cry uncle. Here the concept is the same, with dozens of varieties of pizza (plus several pastas) replacing the beef. \$\$

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.tunasarawbarandgrille.com

The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a new chef, Rolf Fellhauer, who spent 28 years at the famed La Paloma. He has added his touch to the menu, with delicacies such as Oysters Moscow, mussels Chardonnay, and Grouper Brittany. Traditional house favorites remain, and the emphasis is still on fresh fish from local waters. Open daily till 2:00 a.m., the place can get rather festive after midnight, but since the kitchen is open till closing, Tuna's draws a serious late-night dining crowd, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin

73 NE 167th St.,

305-405-6346

Too often purist vegetarian food is unskillfully crafted bland stuff, spiced with little but sanctimonious intent. Not at this modest-looking vegan (dairy-free vegetarian) restaurant and smoothie bar. Dishes from breakfast's blueberry-packed pancakes to Caribbean vegetable stews sparkle with vivid flavors. Especially impressive: mock meat (and fake fish) wheat-gluten items that beat many carnivorous competitors. Skeptical? Rightly. But we taste-tested a "Philly cheese steak" sandwich on the toughest of critics – an inflexibly burger-crazy six year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Yakko-San

3881 NE 163rd. St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-947-0064
After sushi chefs close up their own restaurants for the night, many come here for a rare taste of Japanese home cooking, served in grazing portions. Try glistening-fresh strips of raw tuna can be had in maguro neta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

Betto's Ristorante Italiano

1009 Kane Concourse, 305-861-8166

After roughly 25 years as Caffè Da Vinci, this romantic remodeled, renamed space is now managed by Betto Di Carlo, also a 25-year Italian cuisine veteran (as former owner/effusively charming host of Surfside's neighborhood favorite Café Ragazzi). Best make reservations. Though off the tourist track, the place draws hungry hordes for homemade pastas like pappardelle ai porcini (toothsome wide noodles with fresh mushrooms). Veal piccata, lightly floured and sautéed medallions with a caper-studded lemon white wine sauce, and thicker mozzarella-stuffed chops are also popular. \$\$\$

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, fateh (a chickpea casserole "iced" with thick yogurt), and buttery cheese/herb-filled samusak 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 lunchroom/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Locebo 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 75 years of fermenting pickle juice in the flooring. This cleanly contemporary place attracts this younger generation with the full range of classics, including many varieties of hand-sliced smoked fish, but also healthy options, most notably a wide array of substantial salads

with grilled protein add-ons. Bagels, while machine-made rather than hand-rolled, are freshly baked all day. \$\$

Bella Luna

19575 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura Mall, 305-792-9330

If the menu here looks familiar, it should. It's nearly identical to that at the Upper Eastside's Luna Café and, with minor variations, at all the rest of Tom Billante's eateries (Rosalia, Villaggio, Carpaccio), right down to the typeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobellos, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$-\$

Blu Sushi

600 Silks Run Rod., 954-744-4398

Even hard-core sushi-bar addicts must admit that many such establishments suffer from a certain sameness. Not Blu. At this restolounge in the Village at Gulfstream Park, part of a mini-chain originating in southwest Florida, the specialty makis are outdone in outrageousness only by extravagant cocktails. Yes, there are California rolls. But why be bored when you have an alternative like Kin-SO: tempura king crab salad, tuna, and avocado with scallions, smelt roe, and tempura flakes, plus mayo and sweet eel sauce. \$\$\$

Bourbon Steak

19999 W. Country Club Dr., 786-279-0658

(Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)

At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$-\$

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 relaxingly 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 hunt 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 long-time 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

19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195

Ensnocned 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

2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 305-792-2902

This attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambiance. As in Italy, dishes rely on impeccable ingredients and straightforward recipes that don't overcomplicate, cover up, or otherwise muck about with that perfection. Fresh fettuccine with white truffle oil and mixed wild mushrooms needs nothing else. Neither does the signature Pollo Al Mattone, marinated in herbs and cooked under a brick. And even low-carb dieters happily go to hell in a hand basket when faced with a mound of potatoes alla Toscana, herb-sprinkled French fries. \$\$\$-\$

Kampai

3575 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410

At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricy but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic "Thai hot"). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$\$-\$

La Estancia Argentina

17870 Biscayne Blvd., 305-932-6477

At this market/restaurant, there's a small but quality selection of Argentine grocery staples and wines, plus a butcher counter where backyard BBQers can find everything necessary for a Parrillada party. Alternatively, grab a table and let La Estancia do the cooking – anything from tapas and elegant miga mini-tea sandwiches to hefty grilled Parrillada plates. Most irresistible, though, are the savory and sweet baked goods, especially elaborately frosted layer cakes and delicately crusted empanadas plumply stuffed with hand-cut flank steak, mushrooms in onion sauce, much more. \$\$\$

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 glopplly sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fryng outfit." \$\$\$-\$

Pilar

20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777

Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Millitello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$\$-\$

Pizza Roma

19090 NE 29th Ave. 305-937-4884

Despite its name, this homey hidden eatery serves not Rome's wood-cooked, crunchily-crust pizza but New York-style pies with medium-thick crusts pliable enough to fold in half for neat street eating. Unlike chains, though, this indie is accommodating, so if you want your crust thin and crisp, just ask. Also featured are Italian-American entrées like baked manicotti (that's "mani-goat", for those not from NJ) big enough to share, and sub sandwiches, here called "buletts," to put you in a Sopranos frame of mind. \$

Sushi Siam

19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Chef Philip Ho

16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338

Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply

sinful, as are flaky-crust egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$\$-\$

Copper Chimney

18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075

At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation – plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazazs-e-lazzat (sundried tomato-stuffed paneer/potato dumplings in smooth cream sauce). \$\$\$

Epicure Gourmet Market & Café

17190 Collins Ave., 305-947-4581

Who even knew that the late Rascal House had an ocean view? Diners may have to eat standing up to glimpse water over the dunes from the panoramic café windows of the gourmet market that replaced the Rascal, but you know you're on a tropical beach, not Brighton Beach. The big, bright café's menu, more global diner than Jewish deli, includes daily specials ranging from spa-grilled chicken to homemade Italian sausage and peppers. But it's worth seeking out items that made South Beach's original Epicure famous: sandwiches featuring housemade rare roast beef; shrimp or chunky smoked whitefish salads; fresh baked goods. \$\$\$

The H Restaurant

17608 Collins Ave., 305-931-9106

This friendly, family-owned bistro is the sort of homeaway-from-home found every few blocks in France – here Gerard and Karin Herrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/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 tagliegio and mushroom pies; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

St. Petersburg Deli

17080 Collins Ave., 305-947-9696

Don't expect fancified stuff like menus, or the English language, at this informal market/café. If there's signage identifying the prepared foods behind the counters, it's in Russian, and daily dishes are pretty much what the cooks feel like making. So look and point. We'd suggest pointing at cold yogurt-based soups like tangy okroshka (with cukes, egg, scallions, potatoes, and dill) or hodlnik (similar, with beets added); eggplant roulades, stuffed with spiced shredded carrots, are also a refreshing summer dish. Hot choices include meatballs in rich cream sauce and chicken Kiev. \$\$\$

Timo

17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008

Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannelloni bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill

350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016

It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shalot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

ST. JOSEPH'S PASTRY - ZEPPOLE

OR SFINCE \$2.50 EACH - San Giuseppe - Avail March 11

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Whole or Half
LEG of LAMB (of Rack of LAMB)
Fresh USDA Choice
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Ducks-Geese
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Bellino Chocolate Easter Eggs
Colomba Pasquale-Panettone | Fresh Ricotta
Fresh Basket Cheese
Prosciutto
Di San Danielle
Redondo
Iglesias Serrano
Ham of Spain
Roasted Leg of Lamb w/Roasted Potatoes
Order w/Deposit |
|---|--|

**MADE FRESH DAILY - WHILE SUPPLIES LAST
EASTER/PALM SUNDAY SPECIALTIES April-MARCH 2013**

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
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| PIZZA RUSTICA..... | \$14.99 EA. |
| ZUPPA INGLESE..... | \$11.99 EA. |
| CASSATA..... | \$11.99 EA. |
| STRAFOLI TRAY (HONEY BALLS)..... | \$8.99 EA. |

SWEET ITALIAN EGG BREAD WITH 1 OR 3 OR 4 EGGS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| PER BREAD..... | \$2.50 PER EGG |
| MINI-PASTRY TRAY..... | \$18.99 EA. + TAX |
| ITALIAN COOKIE TRAY 2 LB..... | \$17.99 EA. + TAX |

Available From March 11th

St Joseph's Pastry
Zeppole-Sfince
San Giuseppe
\$2.50 each

PASSOVER SPECIALS April - MARCH 19th

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| SPONGE CAKE LOAF..... | \$4.99 EA. |
| HONEY CAKE LOAF..... | \$4.99 EA. |
| MARBLE CAKE LOAF..... | \$4.99 EA. |
| FRESH BAKED MACAROONS..... | \$8.99 LB. |

LAURENZO'S HOMEMADE

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| SICILIAN CANNOLIS
REG \$3.00 | \$2.25 | FRESH BAKED
ITALIAN BREAD
REG \$1.99 | \$1.00 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|

PASSOVER SPECIALTIES

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| USDA Choice 9-12lb. | White Fish |
| WHOLE BEEF Brisket | Pike-Carp |
| USDA Choice Flat Cut | (Based On Availability all Month) |
| 1st cut Beef Brisket | For your |
| USDA Choice Beef Chuck | Ground Fish |
| Plate Flanken | Farmers Market |
| Kosher Wine for Passover | Bitter Herbs |
| Baron Herzog-Gamla | Chicory-Lettuce |
| Yardin-Carmel | Arugola-Parsley |
| Dry Varieties & Sweet Wines | Horscradish |
| HAROSSET *Dried Fruit, Almonds, Nuts, Honey, Available to Make Harosset* | Watercress-Mint |
| | Dandelion |

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- Featuring CePa's Famous Fresh Seafood Tables A Week
- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Boston Scrod Filet..... | \$16.99lb |
| Yellow Fin Tuna Steaks..... | \$22.99lb |
| Flounder Filet..... | PRICE \$17.99lb |
| Grouper Filet..... | SUBJECT \$20.99lb |
| Red Snapper Filet..... | TO CHANGE \$22.99lb |
| Greysole Filet..... | & PER AVAIL \$20.99lb |
| Swordfish Steaks..... | \$17.99lb |
| Halibut Steaks..... | \$20.99lb |
| Salmon Filets (Atlantic Fresh Farm Raised)..... | \$17.99lb |
| Salmon Steaks (Atlantic Fresh Farm Raised)..... | \$7.99lb |
- Laurenzo's is an Award Winning Wine Shop
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Laurenzo's is an In-Store Cafe
- FREE WiFi -
Since 1988 when we put together a couple of tables and chairs for the men to have espresso and talk while the ladies shopped, our cafe has grown into serving delicious soups, salads, pasta pizza, sprouts of the day, espresso, cappuccino, Gelato and homemade Italian ice. A fun spot in the middle of the store!

PERUGINA CHOCOLATE EGGS



Colomba Pasquale (Easter Dove) - This chocolate Easter cake, said to have been created to commemorate the legend of how white doves were used as a messenger, will delight until the very last bite. The cake is topped with a white cream filling and a chocolate glaze. The shape of a dove is a young girl who brought it to the Lombard conqueror of Pavia, Robert, in 872, who was so impressed that he granted her freedom.

FERRARA COLOMBA TRADIZIONALE 15.5 oz **\$13.99 +tx**

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OPEN 7 DAYS:
Mon-Sat 9am - 7pm
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www.laurenzosmarket.com

Laurenzo's Farmers Market

16445 W. Dixie Hwy
305-944-5052

OPEN 7 DAYS: 7am - 6pm, Sunday: 8am - 5pm (yes, we have fresh herbs & fresh juice!)

Available For The Holidays

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Sweet Galia Melons
Jumbo Artichokes & Baby Artichokes-Andy Boy Broccoli Rabe
~Assorted Fresh Mushrooms~
Portobella, Cremini, Oyster, Mistake, Shiitake,
Dried Mushrooms Chanterelles, Porcini & Morels
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- New Crop Horseradish Root
Beets, Parsley Root, Soup Greens
Fava Beans, Edible Flowers
English Peas, Decorative Salad Savoy!



MIAMI'S URBAN REAL ESTATE LEADER

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UNDER CONTRACT

DESIGN DISTRICT: 3711 NE 2 AVE
FOR SALE \$8,200,000

Great deal in Miami's white hot design district. Iconic Power Studios property available for sale for redevelopment, retail or hospitality use. Property allows +/- 100,000 SF of gross development.

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UPPER EASTSIDE: 7416 BISCAYNE BLVD
FOR LEASE \$30 PSF NNN | FOR SALE \$1,350,000

Prime street retail building facing busy Biscayne Blvd. This space is visible to daily traffic of over 30,000 vehicles per day and is divided into 3 spaces that feature floor to ceiling retail windows and on-site parking

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WYNWOOD: 2900 NW 1 AVE
FOR LEASE \$17 PSF GROSS | FOR SALE \$6,300,000

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LITTLE RIVER: 240 NE 62 ST & 253 NE 61 ST
FOR LEASE | \$4,800 / MONTH EACH

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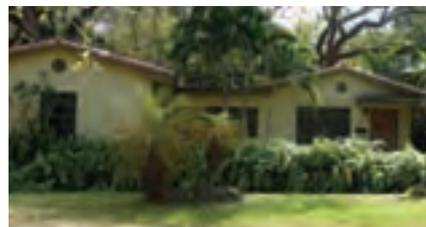
RESIDENTIAL SHOWCASE



MIAMI BEACH: 300 SOUTH POINTE DR #PH5
FOR SALE \$19,300,000

4 BD / 5.5 BA tri-level penthouse located in South of 5th. Enjoy 360° views of the ocean, city and Downtown. This lavish home-in-the-sky features private rooftop pool, sauna, built-in surround sound and high-end amenities.

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