

BISCAYNE

August 2013

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Volume 11 Issue 6

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Times

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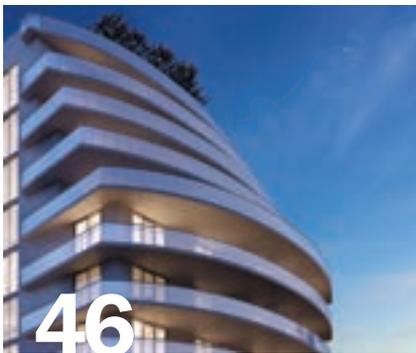
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Commentary: LETTERS

The H-Word: Bad Graphics, Offensive Headline, Horrible Timing, No Perspective

Upon receiving last month's issue of *Biscayne Times*, I was quite shocked to see your cover — for a couple reasons. But I tried to reserve judgment until after I read the cover story by Antolin García Carbonell ("Homo Hysteria," July 2013).

My first surprise is that, for someone in the publishing industry, I would think you should be fully aware that brand recognition is *everything!* And I've come to anticipate each issue of the *Biscayne Times* for its cover art. Specifically, the photographs! You have established a history of showing some unique and interesting photography of the city and its colorful residents. And then you go and put some strange animation on your cover. What were you thinking?

Can you imagine *The New Yorker* magazine suddenly coming out with a cover that is a black-and-white photo? Or a computer-animated graphic? No? Well, your magazine is not *The New Yorker*, yet I would think you would aspire to have the same respect and following, and would recognize their successful pattern.

Now let's get to the actual story. Again, *what were you thinking?* You must be a gay man with severe self-loathing and hatred to publish such a story. Not only did you put a word on the *cover* of your magazine that is akin in the LGBT community to the n-word. But you added a subheadline with the word "pervert." And for good measure, you had a misshapen, sinister character in pink. *On the cover!*

Again, I tried to reserve judgment until after I read the article, thinking there would be some well-researched and written piece of journalism that would redeem these affronts to our community. And of course there was the timing of this issue. You decided to do this in June! Gay Pride month! And the very same month in which we were expecting, and received, perhaps the biggest civil rights victory for the LGBT community ever.

I can't believe you basically allowed a reprint from old articles and stories with lots of quotes of words like "pervert" printed so many times I stopped counting — with absolutely no counterpoint! I kept waiting for the part where you countered the story with where we are now. The small victories along the way. Or some research into how homophobes used to twist and manipulate the facts to terrorize the LGBT community.

Or some research that shows how the LGBT community is no more likely to

be "perverts" than the straight community. Something! Anything! How about mentioning that Miami now is the home to SAVE Dade, Pridelines Youth Services, Aqua Foundation, ACLU of Florida, Safe Schools South Florida, and the Alliance for GLBTQ Youth?

How about mentioning that we now have fought hard to have county and multiple municipal human rights ordinances protecting the gay and lesbian community from discrimination? How about a mere mention of the fact that, at the time of printing, 11 states and the District of Columbia had marriage equality and that the Supreme Court had heard oral arguments and would be ruling on DOMA and Prop 8 — something about those things in the article?

Where was the "look how far we've come" aspect of this article?

No, instead you simply dredged up a shameful and hate-filled time, giving it new life, and possibly inspiring new hatred and empowering new attacks on our LGBT community.

I have been an avid reader and collector of the *Biscayne Times* for the nine years I have been a resident of Miami. I'm also a Realtor and like to give out the *Biscayne Times* to new residents coming to Miami. I usually have told them that this is the go-to publication down here for some off-the-beaten-track stories and progressive reporting.

But now I'm afraid without some sort of apology or balanced reporting in the coming issues, I will consider *Biscayne Times* not a friend of the LGBT community and support it no longer.

Joseph Mooradian
Palm Grove

The H-Word: A Long Time Ago, in an Intolerant Period Far, Far Away

That was a passably interesting piece of history from Antolin García Carbonell, but what's the point?

Surely it's no surprise to your readers that attitudes of half a century ago seem odd or worse today. Your subhead, "Not so long ago..." suggests you were writing about something recent. Yet your narrative's starting point, 1954, was the approximate midpoint in Miami's life so far.

It was nine years before Dr. Martin Luther King's march on Washington and 15 years before the Stonewall riots. Millions of Americans have learned a lot about tolerance since then, and it's hardly

Continued on page 12



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Commentary: **LETTERS**

Letters

Continued from page 10

fair to hold up a past generation's editors for judgment by the values of today.

I worked at both the *Miami News* and *Miami Herald* in years subsequent to the events you described, and cannot recall any such discrimination being voiced or practiced in the newsroom.

*John D. Hopkins
Floyd, Virginia*

Editor's note: Owing to an editing oversight, we neglected to credit the artist who created last month's cover illustration. He is Brian Stauffer.



All Is Not Right in North Miami Beach

Thanks to Erik Bojnansky for his interest in Greynolds Park and for its wonderful article "Green Piece" (June 2013). I live in unincorporated Miami-Dade County, where Greynolds Park is located. For more than 40 years my family, friends, and I have enjoyed going to the park, a true oasis in the city.

I joined the grassroots organization Save Greynolds Park after reading "Green Piece." Since then I have learned other things and have decided to do whatever I can to help save the park.

The following is an update of recent developments and compilation of what we already know.

On July 2, several citizens held a protest in front of North Miami Beach City Hall regarding the rezoning of 17400 W. Dixie Hwy. (a small property blocks from the park), and then some of us went in to sit through the council meeting, in which several residents of North Miami Beach spoke.

Fortunately, the resolution to seek rezoning from B1 (max: two stories) to B2

(max: 15 stories) in the small triangular lot at 17071 W. Dixie Hwy. was tabled, with a 4-3 vote. Mayor George Vallejo voted against tabling the motion. The council held a workshop to discuss this matter on July 16 and will take the first vote on it in early August, followed by a final vote probably a month later.

The city planner, Chris Heid, indicated when asked that there was no site plan attached to the request for the zoning change (which is highly unusual, to say the least), but that given the easement requirements and the fact that the site borders the railway lines, a large building above four or five stories would be hard to build, unless it's 25 feet deep!

In other words, this rezoning would give carte blanche to the developers, JAAL, LLC, which wouldn't specify an intended use. Then why are they requesting a rezoning?

Heid also suggested that allowing the change to B2 will fit with the continuous business district to 163rd Street. This is *not* the case, as there are tennis courts, the Spanish Monastery, apartments, the canal, and a nursing home between these areas. It is *not* a contiguous business district.

When Mr. Alan S. Macken of JAAL, LLC spoke, he said that this area is not residential! There are mainly single homes plus a couple of apartment buildings on the west side of W. Dixie Highway. The residents are also concerned about the potential increase in traffic on this small, two-lane road.

Allowing buildings with a designation of B2 to build up to 15 stories is detrimental to the businesses and homes in the area. The potential for a traffic nightmare, now that the property adjacent to Greynolds Park has been changed by the council to a B2 zone, is obvious. The rezoning to B2 is not compatible with or in scale with the surrounding neighborhood.

This request for rezoning is highly suspect since it will aid a refiling of the rezoning application for 17400 W. Dixie if the developers of that Braha Dixie property next to Greynolds Park lose the court case filed against the city. The lawsuit is based on the fact that the zoning code requires any rezoning to be consistent with, and in-scale with, the established neighborhood land-use pattern,

Continued on page 14

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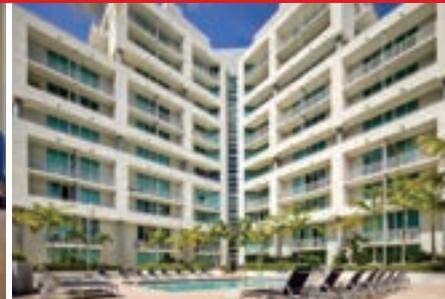


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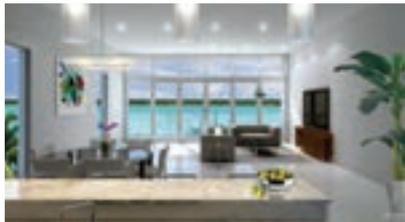


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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 12

since nothing else in this area of the city goes over three stories.

The proposed Braha Dixie project next to Greynolds Park could go as high as 15 stories. If the developers lose the lawsuit, they can then ask for rezoning again and say that there is another nearby property zoned for B2: the property at 17071 W. Dixie Hwy.

The main concern of Save Greynolds Park is, of course, to preserve the integrity of the park, the only large parcel of public land with undisturbed hammock and native vegetation and mangrove estuaries. A development of this size would be guaranteed to have a devastating impact on the park.

Citizens are highly concerned about how the fragile wildlife and plant life that have been there since the park's conception 80 years ago would be affected by such large buildings blocking the sun for a good portion of the day.

The lighting from the buildings at night would also disrupt the natural activities of the wildlife. Apparently no environmental impact studies have been done for this proposed development, but environmentalists with whom members of our committee have spoken unanimously say that the impact would be devastating. And thus far there has been no independent traffic-impact study and no "balloon" study (by anyone), which would reveal how high the project would look from different areas of the park.

The Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Department came out against the development next to Greynolds Park back in June 2012, in a letter written to the North Miami Beach City Council, and it was read at the city council meeting in June 2012. In April of this year, the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Board came out against the project as well.

Interestingly, Braha-Dixie's lobbyist, Keith Donner, was engaged to help elect Mayor Vallejo and Vice Mayor Anthony DeFillipo. Currently he is working for the developers of the hotel/office complex next to the park, and the property was rezoned to B2 with little advertisement of the hearing to do so. (That rezoning is on hold due to the pending lawsuit.) Something is not right.

By the way, Ms. Sally Heyman, the Miami-Dade county commissioner from District 4, where the park is located, has indicated to members of Save Greynolds Park that she's not interested in this matter since it concerns the City of North Miami Beach. Yet she was present at the hearing on July 2 and even addressed the commissioners, by whom she was warmly received.

She did not mention the park.

As part of her job as county commissioner, she is supposed to protect Miami-Dade County public parks, which she is not doing by turning her back on Greynolds and not speaking up against the development.

Thank you so much for your attention to this matter. I think it's a classic case of citizens against less-than-transparent actions by city council members and other government agencies. I feel it is a case worth further investigating.

*Elena Castro-Morán
Miami Shores*

I May Not Be a Highwayman but That Was My Painting

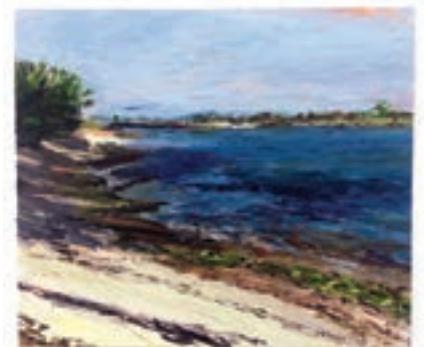
I'm writing in response to Anne Tschida's story about the show "Florida Landscape Paintings" at the Guccivuitton gallery ("No Mere Knockoff," July 2013).

One of the paintings in the story is described as being by one of Florida's "Highwayman" artists. It was actually mine, titled *The End of Virginia Key*.

While I'm flattered by the mistaken relation, it did appear in the press, and I wouldn't want anyone to be rubbed the wrong way (galleries, collectors, etc.).

It's only fair that everyone receives the corresponding credit. And by the way, thank you for the praise and printed image.

*Juan Carballo
Miami*



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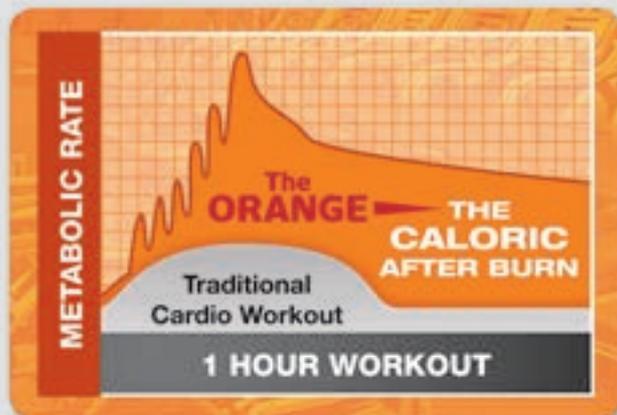
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Welcome to the Circus

For the City of Miami, civic life is one hilarious boondoggle after another

By Jack King
BT Contributor

It's not often that I attend a Miami City Commission meeting these days. Usually it's just not worth the time. Commissioners blab on and on about mindless points that don't mean a damn thing. But the meeting this past July 11 was an exception.

The nonprofit group that is trying to revive the Miami Marine Stadium was going before the commission to get approval for spending their own money to do work that is really the city's responsibility: restoring the stadium and generating enough revenue to keep it operating for years to come.

They got the approval to move ahead, which is most interesting, because for the past 20 years the city has been trying to get rid of the stadium. Someone told city staffers they could demolish the stadium and lease the property to a developer for gazillions. All they could see was the money.

Before they got to the nonprofit stadium group and their star advocate Gloria Estefan, commissioners spent more than four hours "discussing" the need for those infamous red-light traffic cameras. The argument grew contentious, and it was clearly evident this was going to be an issue in the upcoming mayoral race.

For the life of me, I could not figure out why some of the commissioners were fighting so hard for the cameras. There

had not been a rash of accidents caused by motorists running red lights. There was no hue and cry from the police department, demanding the cameras for public safety. There was nothing.

Then the light went on.

The city doesn't have enough money to pay its bills!

This is really nothing new. It has probably happened at least five times in the past 30 years. And here is the grand remedy.

A company comes along that will do all the work and give the city a big hunk of the profits — for no effort and with no questions asked. It is the perfect solution to a serious problem. Unfortunately there have been "perfect solutions" in the past that didn't exactly work out. As a matter of fact, almost none of these "perfect solutions" has ever even lived up to expectations.

What follows is a short list of investment and leasing disasters the city is still paying for. The list is by no means complete. And the dollar figures are estimates — my estimates.

The reason for that?

No one in city government over the past 30 years has any idea how much money the city has spent on public/private investments, how much it has received in lease payments for use of city-owned land, or how much has been pissed away on bad deals. But covering the city these past three decades has given me a good idea.

If you think I might be off base with this, I refer you to the "City of Miami



James L. Knight Center: When UM pulled out, the city was stuck with millions in costs.

Financial Recovery Plan," produced in 1996 by Merrett Stierheim, who was then serving as the pro bono city manager. He pretty much said that he had no idea where the city's money had been going. The plan was designed to make sure they stopped shoving it down a rat hole and that the city never got into this position again.

The city threw the study in the trash can. But in fairness to city officials, they came up with their own plan. The commission decided that the rat hole they were using was too small, and that if they used a much larger rat hole, they could ramp up the volume. For example:

James L. Knight Center In the 1980s, someone in the city made a startling discovery: Miami didn't have a convention center. And that was not so good for a city aspiring to greatness.

Yes, the city did have the Dinner Key auditorium, a leftover Pan Am airplane hangar that had been refurbished several times, mostly by contractor buddies of various city managers — renovations that left it with a radically uneven floor and a leaky roof. It's greatest claim to fame? It was the place where, in 1969, Jim Morrison of The Doors supposedly

unzipped his pants and got himself arrested. I must have 300 friends who swear they were there.

The city partnered with the University of Miami, which was struggling to shed the moniker "Suntan U." A world-class conference and convention facility would do the trick: open up the U and the city to the entire globe. They also partnered with Hyatt Hotels and got the Knight Foundation to throw in some money. It looked like a match made in heaven, so the city signed on the dotted line.

Looks, as we know, can be deceiving. As a top-tier university UM had a long way to go. The volume of conferences projected by the school was nowhere near the number that actually took place. And worse, the center was exactly the wrong size. It was too small for large conferences and conventions, but too big for the little conferences.

The center slogged along for a number of years, until UM got tired of paying for something it wasn't using. A grand bargain was struck and the U was gone. The city picked up the reputed \$20

.....
Continued on page 18

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Circus

Continued from page 16

million note and has been paying the rent and maintenance for years — with little or no income.

Monty's Stone Crab Restaurant Of all the Miami property leases ever effected, Monty's was the best chance for the city to actually make what the property was worth. But alas, it was not be.

Monty Trainer arrived in Miami from Key West via Gainesville modestly broke. Somehow he wrangled control of the one-story Bayshore Restaurant, gas station, and marina. It wasn't long before the place was the hottest spot in the Grove and most certainly the place you went if you were dealing in local political espionage.

Next door was Chuck Underwood's sailboat dealership, Underwood Marine, which would become one of the largest sailboat brokerages in the world. He was building a new facility next to Trainer. The reason Underwood was doing so well was that he sold each boat two or three times. Profit margins were very good indeed.

Eventually it caught up with him and he split town, leaving behind an unfinished, two-story building. Trainer argued that the city should buy both pieces of property for \$1 million and lease them to him. The city did just that.

Monty's Stone Crab became the hottest restaurant in all of Miami. The food was good, but the schmoozing was better. Every political operative in Dade County was a regular, and if you wanted to do business with the boys, you ate there.

The party ended when the feds came looking for Trainer. He sold his lease before heading off to prison for tax evasion. The buyer was Manny Medina, a CPA and real estate investor, and his somewhat underemployed attorney,

Manny Diaz, who would become mayor of Miami a short while later.

The city commission approved the deal, selling a wildly successful restaurant run by a professional restaurateur to a CPA and an attorney. Nobody on the commission even asked if Medina could run a restaurant.

Over the next five years, Monty's Stone Crab Restaurant, grossing \$10 million and paying the city a million a year, crashed and burned. It finally closed, and now the area that was once a thriving restaurant is office space for boat brokers. I can't find the figures they pay the city, but my guess is about \$200,000 for both the marina and the upland property.

They have lots of years left on their lease, and the city has no recourse. Nothing was written into the lease to safeguard against this kind of insanity. A note here: Medina also ran another restaurant into the ground, this one inside the Coconut Grove convention center. Two-for-two with the city.

Marlins Stadium We all know about the Marlins ballpark fiasco, so I won't rehash too much of it. Of the roughly \$1.1 billion in construction costs and finance charges accruing over the life of the bonds that were sold, the city is on the hook for about \$400 million. That works out to \$833,333 per month on the 40-year note.

The deal is backloaded, meaning that most of the money will be paid in the final 20 years. If that is so, then the city will pay some \$1.25 million each month for life of the stadium.



Marlins Stadium: City taxpayers will be shelling out some \$833,333 every month for 40 years.



The Harbour: An 80-year lease for Grove waterfront means it'll be our grandkids' problem.

Another weird factor in all this is that the city demanded commercial components to both the stadium and the parking garage. This seems to be a mantra from the city's parking operation, the Miami Parking Authority. These plans seldom work (actually, not at all in Miami), and it has not worked at the ballpark. There are now 18 commercial spaces of about 4000 square feet each. In two years, not a single one has been occupied.

The problem here is that the stadium is financed for 40 years, but only has a life expectancy of 20 years. Who is going to make 20 years of payments for something that has lost its value? How about the citizens of Miami? Hell, they're still paying for every other screw up by the city over the past 30 years. So don't worry about us being broke. We'll be broke before we can worry about being broke.

And now the city wants to do this all over again with the Grove Key/Scotty's Landing waterfront property in Coconut Grove. A big new development, called The Harbour, is on the drawing boards, which has even more of the same old things that have not worked in the past,

except this time the plan has not one but three restaurants, a huge parking garage that includes a substantial commercial component, and a marina that is about the same size as what's there now.

Possibly the worst part of this new plan is that the lease is for 50 years with provisions for an additional 30 years. Can anybody tell me what this deal will look like in 80 years?

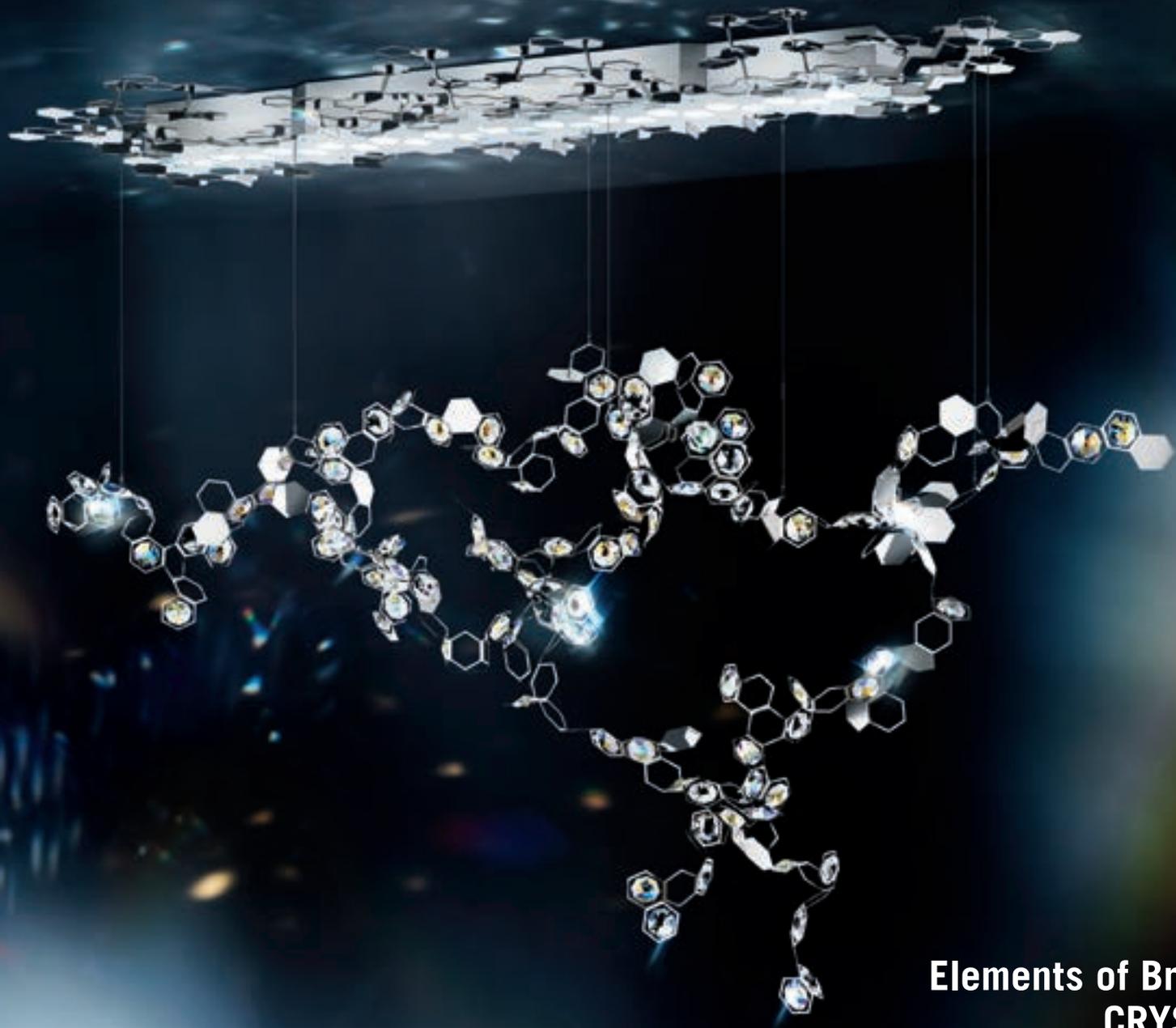
Has the city not learned from its past mistakes? I think not. Actually the city doesn't see any of these debacles as mistakes. Administrators and politicians just keep muddling along, leaving huge messes behind them for someone else to clean up.

On the day the commission was fighting over the traffic cameras, I wandered into Commissioner Marc Sarnoff's office. I didn't agree with him on the issue and he knew it, railing on about how my views were just wrong, and then ending his diatribe by calling me an anarchist.

I would point out to him that the anarchists only come out when the king is making a mess of the country.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Guns Need to Go

How many more tragic incidents do we need before we change our laws?

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

Since George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing unarmed black teen Trayvon Martin, the national dialogue has been consumed by arguments about guns and justice.

Zimmerman, like O.J. Simpson, benefited from the fact that it's difficult to prove a scenario as likely beyond a reasonable doubt when the only surviving witness is the alleged perpetrator. A good attorney can introduce that doubt.

He also benefited from Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law, but there's a big difference between something being legal and morally right. Stand Your Ground is a bad law, as wrongheaded a sign of the times as segregation once was.

No matter how it's construed, death doesn't weigh the same as bumps and bruises. Trying to rationalize Zimmerman's actions is shameful intellectual gymnastics. Zimmerman wrongly assumed Trayvon Martin was a dangerous criminal, and wrongly pursued and confronted him.

Then this frightened, overwhelmed, and untrained man panicked, and met fists with a gun — a device that gives uncivilized power to cowards. Zimmerman shot Trayvon Martin because he was too physically, mentally, and emotionally weak to find a better solution. This sort of person shouldn't have the power of a gun.

When the crossbow was introduced to Europe, English longbow shooters

were insulted. They called this device that gave devastating precision to any fool with two hands "unchristian." But as we work to build a post-violence society, weapons are becoming more and more pointless.

Take the Native American hunter. A few centuries ago, humans had to live off the land like any other creature. They lived side-by-side with the animals they hunted out of necessity and made full use of their kill as a mark of respect. The modern hunter kills for sport. He steps out of his suburban home armed with Gore-Tex, camouflage, GPS, a high-powered, laser-sighted rifle, and whatever else gives him a technological edge. It's all to satisfy his ego, and provide him with the same unmatched, unearned, and uncivilized power George Zimmerman held in his hands.

The whole point of organized society has been to end the need to meet nature on nature's terms of violence and survival. As our societies improve, we're trending toward nonviolence, and learning to manage the violence we feel inclined to perpetrate on one another. We've been anatomically modern for about 200,000 years, and yet, sadly, it's taken until this century — and then only in certain parts of the world — for concepts like a respect for life to become part of our shared values.

Our technology and laws trail behind this trend. Semiautomatic guns with high-capacity magazines (no good use in hunting, by the way) can mow down

a classroom like the crossbow never could; conceal-and-carry laws, along with Stand Your Ground, give people the power and protection to easily kill their neighbors. This runs contrary to the positive evolution of our values and societal goals. Guns truly are the cigarettes of technology, with any perceived benefits crushed by the risks.

Just in the past few weeks in Miami, a man walking along NE 54th Street not far from Biscayne Boulevard was shot to death by a 16-year-old who wanted his cell phone. Soon after, a couple fishing by the bay on NE 31st Street was approached by two men who stripped and robbed the couple before putting a bullet in the man's stomach. Over in Liberty City, a man waiting for a bus was sprayed with bullets from a passing car. I've also been following the case of John Spooner, the 76-year-old white man who shot dead his 13-year-old black neighbor in Milwaukee because he *suspected* him of stealing his precious guns.

I can think of few things weaker and more senseless than ending someone's life using nothing more than your index finger, even in a misguided act of "self-defense."

As other modern societies trend toward nonviolence, America remains woefully behind, thanks to our values, flawed legal system, massive war



industry, and archaic capital-punishment laws. How can a state expect its citizens to respect human life if it grants itself the power to kill?

The gap between freedom and imprisonment is vast, but the gap between imprisonment and death is infinite. That we're willing to risk executing innocent people speaks volumes about how much we value life.

Zimmerman's acquittal is a testament to blind justice, and I mean that in the most negative way. That six people found his actions defensible under Florida law should be a clear indication that we have bad laws born of bad values.

Stand Your Ground doesn't need to exist. Conceal-and-carry doesn't need to exist. Guns don't need to exist. A pitiful disrespect for life doesn't need to exist, nor do ignorance and racism (practiced by any race). These things exist because we allow them.

We may never change our own violent, cowardly, animal nature, but right now we can start to undo the damage caused by our laws, weapons, and attitudes. Anything less would be unchristian.

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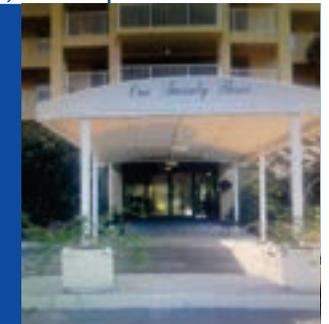


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BizBuzz

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

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

“If it’s worth doing, it’s worth overdoing.” Whoever said that first, it’s really just a funnier, more exuberant way of saying you can’t get too much of a good thing. And it’s a motto Miamians seem to live by.

Take Miami Spa Month... Which is two months long. Or Miami Spice, a discounted dining program originally designed to help fill restaurants during the year’s slowest month, August; it grew to include September ages ago, and this year numerous restaurants jumped the gun with July “Spice preview” menus.

This month’s advertisers certainly seem to be pursuing everything from self-improvement to community development to sheer enjoyment with a passion, pushing good things to excellence. And readers are the beneficiaries.

For example: We doubt that anyone, of any age, remembers the last time that a Happy Hour was an hour. But at returning advertiser **Fish Fish** (13485 Biscayne Blvd., 786-565-9765), owners Rebecca Nachlas and Melvyn Franks stretch it to new levels, with a Happy Hour that lasts all day at the bar. If you haven’t yet discovered this unique fresh seafood market/restaurant/lounge, now’s the time to do it. During Miami Spice, three-course lunches and dinners are \$23 and \$39 respectively.

At longtime North Miami Beach locals’ hangout **Tuna’s Seafood Restaurant** (17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630), owner Michael Chiodo and chef Rolf Fellhauer have a few pleasant surprises for diners, most dramatically a completely renovated dining room and new Yellowfin Lounge. The menu has also been spruced up with old-school spectacle: several items (including Chateaubriand or rack of lamb for two) carved or otherwise partially prepared tableside. During Miami Spice, the new dishes are available on the \$33 three-course dinner menu.

Enjoy a different sort of dinner theater at **Fiorito** (5555 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-2899) on August 12, when the hip contemporary Argentine eatery will present guitar sensation Caril Paura plus locro, Argentina’s unofficial national dish. The date’s a Monday, when Fiorito is normally closed, but best reserve; the first soiree in June, featuring the same musician and food special, drew a crowd of double the restaurant’s capacity.

Hooray! **The Butcher Shop** (165 NW 23rd St., 305-846-9120) is finally fully open. We started tantalizing you back in April with descriptions of this then still-under-construction place’s unique concept: It’s both a beer garden restaurant/lounge and a retail gourmet meat market. After selecting meats (including USDA-certified prime beef, rare to find



these days even in upscale steakhouses) from the roughly mile-long butcher case, buyers can either take purchases home to cook, or get them cooked to eat on-premises with choices of seasonings and sauces. Festive ambiance and artisan beers, including proprietary organic brews, dictates choosing the second option.

With so much always going on at the main market/wine shop/café at **Laurenzo’s Italian Center** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381), it’s easy to overlook Laurenzo’s farmer’s market, across the street. But we never do. Our latest discovery: a stash of unsliced kosher hot dog buns thick enough to top-slice, for an authentic New England lobster roll (which are *never* served in a side-sliced bun). And this month David Laurenzo is introducing soursop — an exotic Caribbean fruit that’s not only tasty but, according to a recent Cancer Research UK report David sent us, contains agents that may kill cancer up to 10,000 times more effectively than chemotherapy, and are also effective against high blood

pressure and many other ills. (He had us at “tasty.”)

New advertiser **Proper Sausages** (9722 NE 2nd Ave., 786-334-5734) had us at the first bite of a fig and blue cheese link. Frankly, if Freddy and Danielle Kaufmann’s recently opened shop sold sausages alone (typically 5-8 varieties daily), it’d be enough. But the couple also sells Florida-produced meats, poultry, and eggs; housemade bacon, pâtés, salads, sandwiches, and prepared entrées; artisan beers; more. Special event: On August 11, Proper will be featured at a sausage/cocktail pairing event at Miami Beach’s Broken Shaker bar. Call for details.

Wow, much restaurant news. But a community’s food reflects its culture, and we’re not the only one who thinks so. Take EMW broker associate **Robbie Bell** (305-528-8557). You know her as the urban lifestyle specialist in relocation and second homes, who can find you a home in your personal perfect neighborhood.

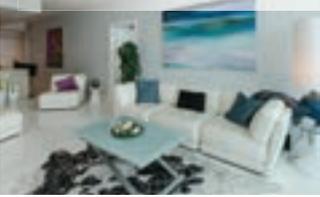
Continued on page 24



Robbie Bell
BROKER ASSOCIATE
Specializing in
Urban Lifestyles & Relocation

CONDO LIVING!

First Time on Market



900 Biscayne—\$783K
Own a Sky Residence! Step off the elevator into your private entry where you can enjoy a stunning view of the bay from the 52nd floor. 1,450sqft, 2 bdms/3 full-bath home includes beautiful white porcelain floors, spacious dining area.

SINGLE FAMILY

An Entertainer’s Dream Home



339 NE 96th Street - \$779K
This “Village Beautiful” 1925 Mediterranean Revival features original Cuban tile flooring and is an entertainer’s dream with spacious living room and dining room that can easily seat 20. 3,495sqft, 2-story, 4 bdrm/3.5 bath home.

SOLD



1775 Washington Ave., #8E - \$340K

SOLD



1581 Brickell Ave., #PH205 - \$275K

Explore the neighborhoods that fit your lifestyle with Robbie Bell, an Urban Lifestyle Specialist who really knows Miami.

CALL ME TODAY
305.528.8557

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EMW Realty
THE PREMIER REALTY GROUP

CELEBRITIES

For this and other great listings, go to www.GoToRobbieBell.info

Cell: 305.528.8557 • Robbie@gotorobbiebell.info • www.gotorobbiebell.info

SPLIT PERSONALITY



PANAMA SOFA/CHAISE LOUNGE \$2885

The Panama's highly customizable design lets you choose its day-to-day identity. Adjust the seat depth, arms and headrest for a smooth transition from sofa to chaise lounge. Top grain leather and feather down cushions help maximize comfort in either setting. Available in white and grey.

N. MIAMI BEACH
3025 NE 163rd St
305.944.8080

HOLLYWOOD
4150 N 28th Terrace
954.874.3888



SCANDESIGN
SCANDESIGN.COM



Icon Brickell 1bedroom with park and bay views \$510,000

Peaceful sixth floor one bedroom overlooking quiet tree lined park with fabulous south views to the bay and Key Biscayne Bridge. Offering all possible amenities with an amazing pool deck, fabulous spa and gym and steps from the Brickell financial community.

William Harbour 786 247 1185



Bay front studio with million-Dollar location \$175,000

Direct, unobstructed bay views from this remodeled 400 sq ft studio in the Venetia Condo, just minutes from South Beach via the Venetian Causeway. Located right next to the planned new complex of the Genting Group. Amazing upside potential!

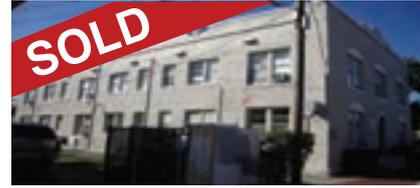
Yassine Benamrouche 786 797 3502



Little Haiti 8-unit multifamily building \$550,000

Completely renovated building close to red-hot Design District. All new electrical, plumbing, roof, central A/C, appliances, bathrooms, tiles and windows. 16 secured parking spaces. Great rental income and upside potential. 13% cap rate. Great for section-8 tenants.

Marie-Charlotte Piro 305 495 6539



Little Havana Multifamily \$750,000

Recently renovated 13-unit building located few blocks from the exclusive Brickell Area, in Little Havana, steps from the new multi-million dollar Marlins Stadium! Cap rate 11.32%

Marie-Charlotte Piro 305 495 6539



Mint 1Bed Rental \$2000/month

Awesome west views from this hi-floor ultramodern apartment. Open kitchen, dark wood floors, finished large balcony. Enjoy the best location in Brickell/downtown and all the amenities of Mint with 2 pools, spa and gym, business center and much more.

Yassine Benamrouche 786 797 3502



Shenandoah Multifamily building \$649,000

10-unit multifamily building in great Shenandoah neighborhood, close to Calle Ocho and the Roads. Great location close to shops and highways yet in low density area surrounded with historic single family homes. 100% occupancy, 8% cap rate, great upside potential!

Marie-Charlotte Piro 305 495 6539

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www.mc2realty.com

Our Sponsors: AUGUST 2013

BizBuzz

Continued from page 22

But she also writes the *Scrumptierou Report*, an insider's guide to her favorite neighborhood restaurants. Download it at www.GoToRobbieBell.info.

When we moved from NYC to Miami, decades ago, "culture" seemed kind of a capital-K thing. No more. Miami's defining passions and soul are all reflected at the eighth annual festival of flamenco songs (which means dance, too) of **Siempre Flamenco** at the Adrienne Arsht Center, August 30-September 1. The performance, which features an exceptional line-up of guest artists from Spain, is at the Center's intimate Carnival Studio Theater, enabling viewers to get up close and personal with the emotions onstage. For info/reservations: 305-866-4387 or www.arshtcenter.org.

Summertime's Midtown Moonlit Movies, this month on August 7 and 14, are always free. But for a chance to upgrade the free flicks sponsored by the **Shops at Midtown Miami** (3401 N. Miami Ave.) with complimentary drinks and dinner, register at their Facebook page. The Shops also reminds readers of this year's Florida Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday, August 2-4, when clothing, footwear, personal computers, and most school supplies will be tax exempt. For more info, contact Lenor Ryan: 305-573-3371 or lryan@ddr.com.

School? Didn't summer vacay just start? Nope, it's really time to start preparing for the 2013-2014 school year, which, at returning advertiser **Monsignor Edward Pace High School** (15500 NW 32nd Ave., 305-623-7223), begins on August 19. A very limited number of student slots at Pace — which, under the direction of principal Ana Garcia, has now integrated iPads 100% into its curriculum — are open at press time, so call or go to www.pacehs.com immediately for applications.

Kids want to go to school looking cool. So this month partners Kevin and Francis Bacon at **The Cutting Room** (1666 79th St. Cswy., 305-868-8725) are offering haircuts for just \$15 to boys and girls up to age 15. Visit www.thecuttingroommiami.com to see how hip you can look.

Eyeglasses haven't traditionally been considered fashion accessories, especially for kids taunted as "four-eyes." But the designer selection at **USA Optical** (17096 W. Dixie Hwy., 786-486-5294) will have your kid, or you, not just seeing

great but looking great. Bring in the coupons in this issue's ad for two deals: 25% off new glasses, and a free eye exam.

Learning is something that can continue beyond school — and should in certain crucial areas, such as your personal self. **Daily Offering Yoga** (6901 Biscayne Blvd., www.dailyofferingyoga.com) has three offerings this month. On 8/31, Yoga 'n' Rhythm transforms participants by expanding creativity and releasing stress musically. Monday night Buddhist Basics covers fundamentals of Buddha's teachings. And serious potential teachers can learn more at an open house on August 10, covering the 200-hour yoga-teaching program.

Another crucial continuing education area: insuring urban development that works for a whole community. Back by popular demand, the **University of Miami School of Architecture** and UM's interdisciplinary Masters in Real Estate Development + Urbanism graduate program's one-day seminar, "Introduction to Urban Commercial Real Estate Development for Non-Developers." It won't make you an instant DIY architect or real estate professional, but it'll enable you to make informed decisions. For info on the September 14 seminar, call 305-284-4420 or email mredu@miami.edu.

One nondeveloper-type development that thrills us is the increasing number of stores blurring the lines between art and craft. An outstanding example: new advertiser **Frangipani** (2516 NW 2nd Ave., 305-573-1480), a modern lifestyle boutique that's part shop, part gallery, focusing on sustainable and handmade products. Stop by to check out their modern and very fun stock of clothes, toys, tattoos, stationery, body lotions, clocks, bar glasses, and other items that are useable but definitely art. During the shop's annual "Florida Pass Sale," August 29-31, locals receive a 20% discount with your Florida driver's license.

Even your home's utilitarian kitchen can become part gallery, thanks to new advertiser, and new Wynwood shop, **Appart** (141 NE 24th St., 305-200-6232), which sells unique artful kitchen appliances. Check out their stock of premium KitchenAid, Blendtec, and Bodum countertop units in exclusive colors; products are designed to both look amazing and last a lifetime.

Ah, how we wish new advertiser **Sit 'n' Sleep** (14440 Biscayne Blvd.,

Continued on page 25

305-705-9723), which is currently celebrating its grand opening, had been around when we were furnishing our small condo a decade ago. If that had been true, our living room would sport a focal Italian sleeper sofa that projected elegance to the entire space, rather than a futon-ish thing that screams college dorm.

If you're a condo dweller, it's possible you never thought of a fish tank as a design element that could bring the outside inside, with style to spare. Consult new advertiser **Belle Aquarium and Garden Design** (786-718-6487). And if you have an actual outside — a yard or whatever — this think-outside-the-box company can also handle design, installation, and maintenance of gardens, from veggio to Zen. Go to www.belleaq.com for a rundown of all possibilities.

Shopping fans who'd rather park once and then enjoy strolling many possibilities, rather than wasting a tank of gas driving between stores, will join us in welcoming two new Upper Eastside advertisers.

Antiques & Design Center (8690 Biscayne Blvd.), a retail complex home to 15 specialty furniture/design stores, will be growing by another 13,000 square feet, for a total of 39,500 square feet of retail space. Danny Reyes, president of Regaland Properties, hopes to break ground for the mall's second expansion in two years by the end of August. Call him at 305-458-7134.

Big changes are also in the works for iconic **Biscayne Plaza** (79th Street and Biscayne Boulevard), a new advertiser under the new ownership of Global Fund Investments, headed up by Doron Valero. Most specifics are yet to come, but thrift store addicts can anticipate a mega-Goodwill store in the 23,000-square-foot space formerly occupied by Big Lots. There'll be a new CVS Pharmacy, too, and at least two spaces are yearning for eateries. Interested in opening a restaurant or a retail business? Call Douglas Wolfe at 786-367-7223.

Transitioning from artsy/development stuff to seasonal nitty-gritty practicality: It's the height of hurricane season. But that needn't mean months of ugly shutters ruining the appearance of your home or business. Welcome new advertiser **VITRI Corporation** (141 NE 3rd Ave. #600, 305-767-7971), a specialist in durable and beautiful high-impact glass. Downtown's DDA has actually offered to contribute 75% of the total cost to replace aluminum eyesores with this glass. But wherever you live or work, VITRI offers complimentary

on-site consultations.

No need to lose power in summer's storms, thanks to **Joe Blair Garden Supply** (320 NE 79th St., 305-757-5554). See this issue's ad for special deals on Honda generators — and a Honda mower, for after-storm clean-up.

Cars need special summer maintenance, too, but it needn't cost a bundle, at least not for BMW owners. Munich Autohaus (12400 NE 13th Pl., 305-893-5958) is continuing its keepin' cool specials: \$60 for a coolant flush; 15% off all A/C work).

And the South Florida resident veterans at **Busy Bee Car Wash** (10550 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-5889) remind drivers that appearance is far from the main reason for washing/waxing this season. Intense sun causes gloss loss and stains, plus cracks upholstery and rubber; seasonal rains, rather than cleaning, trap sediments to cause rapid oxidation and corrosion. So see this issue's ad for some special summer discounts.

Is anyone out there seriously dreaming, this month, about ways to grow their businesses, rather than dreaming about lounging in a hammock with a pitcher of mojitos? If so... Well, we hardly know what to say to you. Oh, wait. We actually do: At new advertiser **PrintDocs** (2020 NE 163rd St. #101, 305-999-0245), a full-service graphic design and printing company, owner Wayne Seymour can help relieve your unseasonal obsession with work by doing your promo projects for you. The company specializes in enhancing your corporate presence in today's global marketplace. And customers praise PrintDocs for speed, high quality, and low price.

Finally: If you haven't already, you soon will be seeing ads for **the campaigns of Robert Malone and Richard Dunn**, both running for Miami City Commission in District 5 — which you may live in and not even know it. Following 2010 U.S. Census results, boundaries between District 2 and District 5 were redrawn — controversially, with the Upper Eastside split in two. We're not going to tell you here who to vote for. We're just telling you it's a wide-open race with likely major repercussions for those living north of NE 61st Street, and *BT* readers will likely decide the election. So please, regardless of who you vote for, just vote.

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

I ♥ UMIAMI

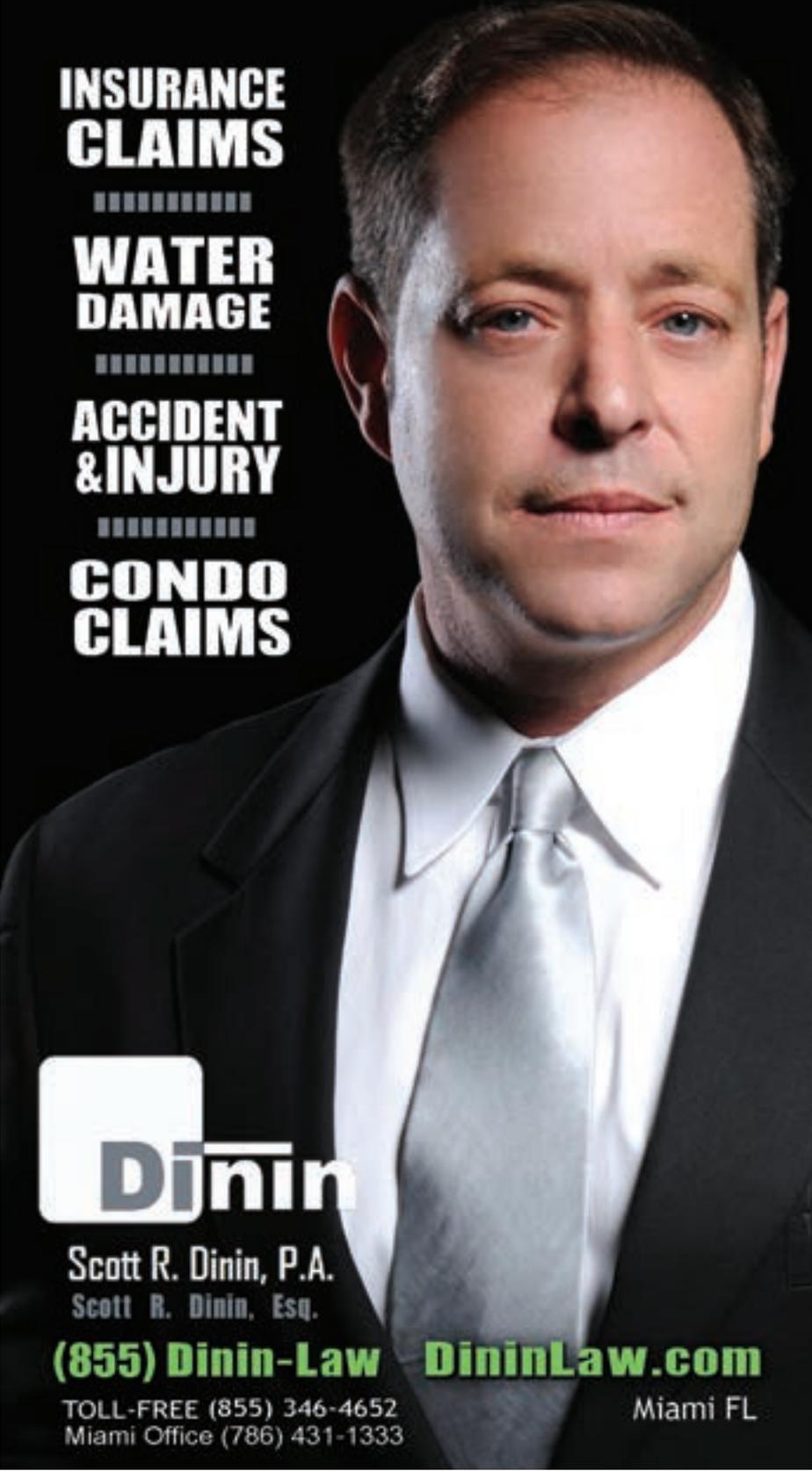
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Miami FL



Billboard Jungle

One of the nation's top experts on outdoor advertising says Miami has "America's most illegal billboard."

Guess where it's located.

By Erik Bojnansky

Photos by Silvia Ros

On May 20, Bacardi Limited, the family-owned, Coral Gables-based spirits company that creates and distributes Bacardi rum worldwide, celebrated Cuban Independence Day by launching a massive advertising campaign. The company produced short Internet movies celebrating the exploits of Emilio Bacardi, son of Bacardi rum founder Don Facundo Bacardi Masso, who participated in Cuba's independence movement against Spain in the late 19th Century.

Bacardi also ran a television commercial set in U.S.-occupied Cuba in the year 1900, the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, where a sexy female independence fighter introduces a handsome but awkward American soldier to the Cuban concept of rum and Coke. "Cuba Libre!" she shouts before walking away.

You don't need to watch television to be infected with the urge to drink rum. Advertisements with Bacardi bottles and the bat-winged Bacardi symbol proclaiming "Cuba Libre!" or "Vivimos!" are plastered on several buildings that can be seen from Interstate 95 or I-395 in downtown Miami — at least as of last month.

But it isn't just Bacardi ads. Drive along the interstate or state expressways within Miami's city limits, or various routes in Brickell, downtown, Park West,



Attorney William Brinton in front of America's most illegal billboard: "A billboard at this particular site represents the most egregious violation of the Highway Beautification Act that I have ever seen."

Omni, the Design District, or Wynwood, and you'll see a whole host of advertisements strapped to high-rise buildings or hoisted on tall billboards.

Alcoholic beverages, new automobiles, car insurance, plastic surgery, STD testing, Internet service, fast-food restaurants, colored water, supermarkets, the next *Smurf* movie, private schools,

hospitals — all these products can be found in the Miami skyline, or on some stretches of the highway, *instead* of the Miami skyline.

There are even light-emitting diode (LED) billboards, run by Clear Channel Outdoor, that flash ads, sometimes animated, for supermarkets, the beaches of Palm Beach County, and the latest shows

at the Arsht Center.

If those commercial messages don't suit your fancy, visit the American Airlines Arena and watch the "MiamiMedia-Mesh," a 3375-square-foot video screen above the facility's front entrance. Not only does the display promote the Miami

.....
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Downtown Miami: “No tourists want to visit South Florida to see billboards. No residents are lobbying elected officials to demand more outdoor advertising.”

Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 27

Heat and upcoming concerts, but also watches, banks, insurance, and other things not sold at the arena.

Or gaze at the façade of the 366-foot-tall InterContinental Miami Hotel at night. Amid light-produced images of a nimble dancing woman or floating bubbles, you can catch a commercial for Toro Toro, a restaurant and club inside the hotel. The lady, the bubbles, and the ad can be seen clearly as far away as South Beach.

Or take a drive up Biscayne Boulevard. Once you get beyond the crush of “murals” adorning the sides of condos, you won’t see as many large advertisements, though notable exceptions include aging aging billboard structures by Soyka Restaurant, a few more farther

north in pockets of unincorporated Miami-Dade, and five scattered around Aventura. You can also see advertisements on flat, illuminated signs beside bus benches or affixed to phone booths in Omni, Edgewater, and the MiMo Biscayne Historic District.

And that’s just the beginning.

The Gusman Center for the Performing Arts, the Miami Children’s Museum, and the James L. Knight Center — three downtown-area institutions — now have permission to set up 750-square-foot electronic billboards to radiate commercial advertisements. In exchange, Miami will receive up to \$1 million per year in fees and revenue sharing.

In 2010, the Miami City Commission approved developer Mark Siffin’s proposal to build a pair of LED “media towers” 350 and 250 feet high on top of a 100-foot-tall parking garage that would

continuously broadcast advertisements. Siffin, in turn, promised to pay the city \$1.5 million annually.

The media towers were never built because Siffin failed to close on his \$190 million deal with *Miami Herald* owner McClatchy to buy ten acres of land. But as far as the City of Miami is concerned, it’s still legal to build media towers as tall as 500 feet in the Omni redevelopment district, if it’s approved by the city commission and a minimum permit of \$1 million is paid. Media towers can also be built in the Southeast Overtown/Park West redevelopment district, although city regulations governing their design are vague.

Lucia Dougherty, a land-use attorney and lobbyist who represents Van Wagner, a company that operates the most mural ads and bus-bench signs in Miami, says outdoor advertisements don’t just

provide lots of cash for the industry. They’re also lucrative for private property owners.

“It can be up to \$500,000 a year, depending on the size and location,” Dougherty says. “They did good things for the landlords when the recession hit. Some wouldn’t have survived without them.”

Financial advantages aside, historian Arva Moore Parks, a lifelong Miami resident, can hardly stand the ad canopy she sees when she visits downtown or travels to and from Miami Beach. “It’s terrible,” she says. “We finally get some decent architecture, and there’s an iPad advertisement on the side of it.”

Striving to fight the spread of these outdoor advertisements are groups like Scenic Miami and Citizens for a Scenic

Continued on page 30

INTRODUCING THE **Liposonix**[®] TREATMENT



1 treatment
1 hour
1 size smaller:

Fat reduction that **fits**[™]

Do you have areas of unwanted fat around your abdomen or love handles that you can't seem to get rid of, even with diet and exercise?

If so, the Liposonix treatment may be the perfect fit for you.

The Liposonix treatment is a non-surgical fat reduction procedure that uses advanced ultrasound technology to permanently destroy unwanted abdominal fat just beneath the skin.

- Noticeable results after just one treatment
- Customizable to address specific "problem" areas
- Non-surgical with little to no downtime
- Backed by over 10 years of research and testing

The Liposonix treatment is available at our office. To find out if you are a candidate, call us today for more information.



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MEDICAL • COSMETIC • SURGICAL

2999 NE 191st St., Penthouse One, Aventura, FL 33180 | 305-933-1151

Average waistline reduction is 1 inch or 2.5 cm. Office visit and individual results may vary. Results typically seen in 8 to 12 weeks. Not a replacement for liposuction surgery or a healthy lifestyle, or a way to lose weight.

Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 28

Florida. So far their efforts have succeeded in delaying a proposed ordinance that would have allowed street-level electronic signs to advertise virtually anything, anywhere.

In addition, they have delayed a much more sweeping — and controversial — proposal that could lead to even more outdoor advertisements to clutter Miami's visual landscape.

Until a few weeks ago, the city was poised to enter into an agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that would have allowed Miami to continue ignoring state laws requiring that outdoor advertisements within 600 feet of the interstate (I-95, I-395, I-195) and state-maintained highways (SR 836, SR 112) stay at least 1000 feet away from each other and that their size not exceed 1000 square feet.

The agreement would bless the city's currently illegal practice of allowing outdoor advertisements to be within 300



31 NW 13th St.: You'll see this one driving along I-195, but don't take your eyes off the road!

feet of each other (a mere 150 feet in the Park West Entertainment District), and of approving murals on buildings as large as 10,000 square feet. For signing off on the deal, FDOT would receive half of the city's permit fees from murals.

Peter Ehrlich, vice president of Scenic Miami, says visual pollution in the City of Miami is overwhelming. "Outdoor advertising is in your face. It's direct. It's obnoxious," he asserts. "South Florida depends on tourism and our scenic beauty to attract residents and tourists. No tourists want to visit South Florida to see billboards. No residents are lobbying elected officials to demand more outdoor advertising."

Barbara Bisno, president of Scenic Miami and a former federal prosecutor, says that, besides being obnoxious, many outdoor advertisements are unsafe for drivers, harm property values, and in the case of LED billboards, are flat-out illegal. "Many, many of the billboards — free-standing and on buildings — are illegal under county, state, and federal law and agreements," she declares. "LED

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A BETTER BOULEVARD ANTIQUES & DESIGN CENTER

8690 Biscayne Boulevard

FIRST-CLASS RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES IN A BRAND-NEW BUILDING

Mid-Century, Art Deco, Vintage Furnishings & Designers

Remember that unattractive old gas station at the Boulevard and 87th Street? *It's history.*

Coming soon: A very attractive new addition to the Antiques & Design Center. Seven store spaces with 22-foot ceilings, independent entrances on Biscayne Boulevard, private parking, high traffic, and even higher visibility. Already designers and dealers in other states have shown great interest in the project. They want to have a presence in Miami, where business is booming thanks to the hot real estate market. Many designers and dealers report that they are frequently being asked by clients to find unique and interesting items for their new residences. The demand for quality antiques and mid-century furnishings has spiked in the past year.

Join us and become part of our success at the Antiques & Design Center. For more information, contact Danny Reyes at 305-458-7134 or dancenyreyes@aol.com.

Retail spaces from 1500 to 2900 square feet, with lease rates from \$2800 to \$6500 per month.



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North Miami, Florida 33160
tel: 305-944-3727
www.the-collection.us



Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 30

billboards are particularly noxious to the community as they're distracting to drivers, block our subtropical landscape, diminish our uniqueness for tourists and residents alike, and reduce property values for nearby residential and commercial property."

William Brinton, a Jacksonville attorney who does pro bono work for Citizens for a Scenic Florida and Scenic America, is involved in the fight as well. In fact, thanks to his intervention, the city's proposed deal with FDOT and FHWA has been put on hold. Fear is motivating Brinton — fear that the deal, if approved, would erode the intent of the federal Highway Beautification Act of 1965, which is to control the proliferation of advertisements along interstates and highways. (City commissioners are scheduled to discuss the matter on September 12.)

Brinton also argues forcefully that Miami's existing law governing wall murals is unconstitutional. How so? Courts have repeatedly found that



The Herald building has sported murals for years, particularly the lean years, but not much longer.

banning outdoor advertisements doesn't violate First Amendment rights of free speech, Brinton says. That's why numerous communities and even four states (Alaska, Hawaii, Vermont, and New Hampshire) have managed to outlaw billboards entirely.

But to *restrict* a form of speech unless a property owner or an advertising company pays large sums of money to the city government — *that*, Brinton insists, is a violation of the First Amendment: "Basically, this is a speech-licensing scheme on private property."

Eston "Dusty" Melton worked as a *Miami Herald* reporter before becoming a lobbyist in 1984. Today Melton advises Scenic Miami, although he says he doesn't mind billboards and murals. In fact, 28-years-ago Melton was hired by billboard companies to lobby for a law — successfully — that enabled billboards to be legally constructed next to expressways in Dade County. But Melton became upset with some in the billboard industry who brazenly flouted

Continued on page 34



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Broker

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Jeff Rose
Broker Associate

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305-949-2181

Email: randy@roseandroserealty.com / jeff@roseandroserealty.com



Listed \$769,000
SOLD \$702,500

NORTH MIAMI

KEYSTONE POINT 4 BR 4 BTH
Waterfront pool home with ocean access and no fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. 1 car garage, spacious patio area & pool. 75 FT on the water. Terrazo floors thru-out. Great Waterfront Location / SUPER BUY



\$1,395,000

NORTH MIAMI

SANS SOUCI EST / 5 BR 3 BTH
Totally RENOVATED/UPDATED 5 BR 3 BTH 2 car garage with A/C. Marble floors, Impact windows, Gas generator, New seawall and dock, 25,000 lb boat lift and lift for 2 Wave runners.



\$419,000

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES / 3 BR 2 BTH
Great Opportunity with 35FT BOAT DOCK SPACE. Completely remodeled. Marble Floors thru-out. New kitchen & bathrooms. Direct on the Intracoastal and Wide-Bay.



\$899,000

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

POINCIANA ISLAND 4 BR 3 BTH Approx 2659 SF
This private island corner townhome has a huge marble backyard. Master suite with balcony overlooking the water. Finger pier included behind unit with boat elevator in place. 1 car garage. Ocean access/no fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. 24 hr guard gated community.



\$399,000

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES / 2 BR 2 BTH
Great Opportunity PH unit smack on the Intracoastal. All updated. Washer/Dryer in unit. 2 assigned covered parking spaces Owner will hold first mortgage with 60% down @ 6% per annum, interest only with 3 year balloon.



\$410,000

EASTERN SHORES

TOWNHOUSE 3 BR 2 1/2 BTH
2 story Townhome on ocean access canal. This waterfront TH has an up to 35 FT boat dock slip included. Walk to shopping, dining, movies and more. Sauna in master.



Listed \$1,085,000
SOLD \$ 970,000

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES 4 BR 3 BTH
Beautifully renovated waterfront pool home. Dock your boat. Boat elevator included. Ocean access & no fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. 2 Car garage has been converted to office/library or can be used as 5th BR. Storm Shutters. 24/7 Guard-Gated Community.



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NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES / 3 BR 3 BTH
Great Opportunity - Split floor plan. 2 car garage. Boat elevator, dock, pool, spa. Direct ocean access and minutes and no fixed bridges to Haulover Inlet. 85FT WF.



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SOLD \$420,000

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

EASTERN SHORES 3 BR 2 1/2 BTH
Nice corner unit waterfront townhome located in the guard-gated community of Eastern Shores. Built in 2000. Over 1,600 SQ FT. High 9FT Ceilings and 8FT doorways. Attached one car garage. Dock space for upto 25ft boat.

Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 32

the law. And he has grown frustrated with City of Miami officials who routinely ignore current laws that, with rare exceptions, ban LED billboards and “automatic electronic changing signs” *anywhere* in the county.

“The City of Miami, since July 2003, has engaged in serial acts of municipal prostitution,” Melton charges. “By that I mean the Miami City Commission authorizing certain types of things in clear and blatant violation of the county-wide sign code, in exchange for millions of dollars paid to the city by the sign companies.”

Indeed, Miami-Dade County attorney Robert Cuevas, in an April 2012 letter to county Commissioner Barbara Jordan, says the city *is* in violation by allowing electronic billboards within its city limits. Enforcement of that law, however, requires authorization from the county mayor or the county commission, Cuevas adds.

That authorization has not yet been granted.

Meanwhile, the county’s tenant at the American Airlines Arena, the Miami Heat, continues to display prohibited commercials on its giant electronic screen. The Heat can legally have a digital sign since the arena sits on more than ten acres of land, as required by county law. But it can’t advertise products not related to what is sold inside the arena, Cuevas says. The county could fine the Miami Heat tens of thousands of dollars. So far, the county has only sent warnings.

“We have told them several times that they should only have point-of-sale advertising,” laments Eric Silva of the county’s Regulatory and Economic Resources department. “We have tried to keep on top of them.”

The county has also been less than vigilant with the City of Miami. In fact, county commissioners in 2007 gave approval to the city for special “mural” districts that include chunks of Brickell, downtown, Park West, Omni, the Design District, and the Civic Center/Jackson Hospital area. The county even expanded the area — twice — allowing the mural districts to



Biscayne Boulevard condos are popular venues for murals, which help cover owners’ maintenance costs.

cover greater segments of the interstate and state-maintained highways, without concern for the federal Highway Beautification Act.

Right now, Miami makes at least \$4 million per year from billboards and murals, says Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes downtown Miami and Brickell.

Approximately \$1 million of that is generated by permit fees from three billboard companies: CBS Outdoor, Clear Channel Outdoor, and Carter Outdoor. Between 2003 and 2008, the city approved a series of settlement agreements that gave those three companies the exclusive right to maintain a total of 45 billboards near I-95 — areas within 600 feet of the roadway that were once protected by city and county laws.

In return, the billboard companies paid the city lump sums of cash and pledged to remove certain billboards elsewhere in the city. “The city was trying to encourage more profitable locations,” explains Mike Llorente, chief of staff for Commissioner Francis Suarez, who was elected after the original settlements were approved. “The idea was that the billboard companies would be encouraged to take billboards

Continued on page 36

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1151 STILLWATER DRIVE

Stunning guard-gated Miami Beach bayfront island-style home almost new, totally rebuilt less than 3 years ago with glistening views of Biscayne Bay and multimillion dollar homes of Indian Creek. Interior features include marble flooring, high ceilings, open kitchen, high end baths. Lots of windows (impact) and doors unite interior with pool and bay. Outdoor features include rebuilt pool and spa, keystone patio, dock, boatlift. **\$1,695,000**



790 NE 72ND STREET

Breath-taking 2-story Med Revival home in Bayside Historic District. Featured in films, TV and print ads. Wood floors, volume and beamed ceilings, eat-in gourmet kitchen with stainless steel appliances. 3,281sf 3/2/1 main house + 1/1 guest house. Impact windows/doors. Fenced private yard on quiet street in gated historic neighborhood. Lush tropical landscaping complements the genteel ambiance. French doors lead to pool and Chicago brick patio. Old World charm by Biscayne Bay and the chic shops of the Upper Eastside. **\$1,395,000**



435 NE 55TH STREET

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94 NW 97TH STREET

Light, bright, airy fully renovated pool home for rent in the heart of Miami Shores Village. Open floorplan with volume ceilings, large living area with fireplace, spacious family room with lots of windows and sliding doors opens out to private tropical pool and garden. All impact windows throughout. Updated kitchen with stainless steel appliances. Expansive garden with pool. Unique opportunity to rent a home in mint condition. **\$2,995/MONTH**



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Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 34

out of residential communities.”

The other \$3 million annually comes from murals, Sarnoff says. Miami receives fees ranging from \$48,000 to \$120,000 a year for the 35 city-permitted murals now existing in the city. Under the city’s current ordinance, another ten can be installed.

Sarnoff was once a critic of outdoor advertisements, but now he’s a fan of the city’s mural ordinance. Instead of 87 unregulated murals, Sarnoff says, the city will have only 45, with tight design standards whereby only 15 percent of an ad’s content can have words, and adult content is prohibited. “I wanted to create scarcity,” he explains, “scarcity that will create value.”

As a result, the murals provide decent revenue for a city prone to financial meltdowns. Sarnoff says he’s not distressed at the prospect of giving up half the mural revenue to FDOT because he’s certain that money will be reinvested in state roads within Miami. He also dismisses complaints by Scenic Miami activists.



Which would you rather look at: A nice example of contemporary architecture or a beer bottle?

“Most of what they get is wrong and is factually and legally incorrect,” he says, later adding: “Opinions are like belly buttons, everyone has one.”

Yet when it comes to presumably illegal LED advertisements, Sarnoff respects the opinion of Miami City Attorney Julie Bru, who claims that Miami no longer must follow Miami-Dade’s billboard laws. “In this case, I go by what the city attorney tells me,” Sarnoff says.

Bru believes that the city is no longer obligated to abide by the county’s outdoor advertising law because Miami “opted out” of it. The opportunity to opt out was created in 2007, when county officials allowed cities to opt out of one specific provision of its sign law. That provision is a “protected zone” that prohibited outdoor advertisements within 600 feet of an expressway.

Cities choosing to opt out of that part of the county’s law would be free to sanction billboards adjacent corridors like I-95, I-395, and the Palmetto. So far, eight cities have opted out:

Continued on page 38



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A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black sleeveless top. She is seated at a piano, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark, with some out-of-focus lights and a microphone on a stand in front of her.

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88.9 FM

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Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 36

Cutler Bay, Doral, Hialeah, Hialeah Gardens, Medley, Miami, North Miami, and Sweetwater.

Bru's interpretation is much broader: If you opt out of the "protected zone" provision, you've opted out of everything in the law. County attorney Robert Cuevas says no: Opting out applies solely to the protected zone. At the moment, the issue remains a legal stalemate.

Outdoor advertising is tightly controlled in most cities along the Biscayne Corridor. El Portal, Biscayne Park, Miami Shores, and Bay Harbor Islands have banned billboards altogether, and placed restrictions on other signs. North Miami Beach prohibits billboards, too, but city officials reserve the right to permit advertisements on street furniture such as bus benches.

Aventura doesn't allow outdoor advertisements of any kind, although there are exceptions. Five billboards west of Biscayne Boulevard are allowed to remain because they were erected prior to Aventura's 1995 incorporation, says



"Many, many of the billboards are illegal under county, state, and federal law and agreements."

city manager Eric Soroka. In 2003, a variance allowed Clear Channel to raise the height of its billboard next to the flyover at NE 203rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard. In exchange, Clear Channel let the city use one of the billboard's sign faces. Soroka says the deal brings in \$144,000 per year, which is funneled to the Aventura City of Excellence Charter School. When the arrangement ends in 2015, Soroka adds, the billboard will come down.

Within the City of Miami, laws prohibiting outdoor advertisements of any kind by interstate highways have existed since the early 1960s. First, Metro-Dade County banned outdoor advertisements of any kind countywide within 600 feet of newly constructed I-95 in 1963. Then the City of Miami followed with its own ban of billboards within the 600-foot protected zone in 1965, the same year the Highway Beautification Act was passed.

Florida, however, never got around to passing any laws governing signage

Continued on page 40

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Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 38

by the interstate or state highways until 1972, and only after the federal government threatened to cut transit funding.

Prior to the passage of those laws, signs of every kind infested major thoroughfares, remembers Arva Moore Parks. The neon signs as you entered Miami from Miami Beach, along the MacArthur Causeway, were especially gaudy. "That's why I laugh when people say the Herald building ruined the view of Biscayne Bay," quips Parks. "The Herald building actually *improved* the bayfront. I remember those signs. When you came across the causeway, they were particularly prominent."

A faded aerial picture of the MacArthur Causeway from the 1950s was included in a packet the City of Miami sent to FDOT in 2011. It showed gigantic signs lining the bayshore by the causeway. Big signs were also featured in several other photographs, shot from 1927 to 1969, included in the packet, among them the iconic Coppertone billboard depicting a mischievous dog



"It's terrible. We finally get some decent architecture, and there's an iPad advertisement on the side of it."

pulling down a little girl's bathing suit.

Under a Florida statute, cities are allowed to avoid state guidelines governing outdoor advertisements *if* different standards existed prior to 1972. The old photos were the city's proof that signs

as large as 14,000 square feet were "customary" before Florida enacted its sign laws.

William Brinton insists that the outdoor advertisements shown in the city's packet were illegal in Miami by the

1960s and thus not "customary."

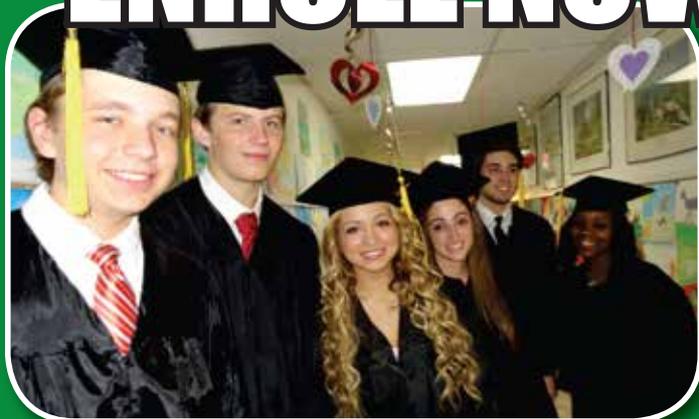
"To be blunt, false representations have been made as to the *customary size* of outdoor advertising signs in the City of Miami at the critical dates to secure your agency's approval," Brinton wrote in a July 8 letter to FDOT.

Brinton leveled even more stinging rebukes in a July 24 letter to the Federal Highway Administration. He included photographs of the western face of the Miami River Center, the city's administrative office building. Covering that west wall is a huge advertising mural. The Van Wagner company pays Miami \$9250 per month plus a percentage of revenue for the privilege of using its building as a giant billboard. The murals draped over the Miami River Center have included ads for Heineken beer, a Spike TV show called *Auction Hunters*, and most recently, CNN's new morning show *A New Day*.

However, the city's building, which is 300 feet from I-95, is zoned "civic institutional." FDOT doesn't permit advertisements on such buildings within

Continued on page 42

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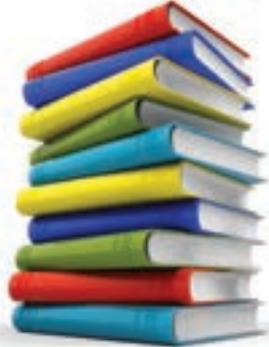
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Even the back sides of condos are fair game for murals, especially if, like these, they're visible from I-395.

Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 40

600 feet of an interstate highway.

"A billboard at this particular site represents the most egregious violation of the Highway Beautification Act that I have ever seen," Brinton stated in his letter to FHWA officials. "And I can tell you that I have seen thousands of violations over the past 30 years. Behind these billboards are the 7th floor offices for the Miami Code Enforcement Department, the 8th floor offices for the Miami Public Works Department, and the 9th floor offices of the Office of the City Attorney."

Brinton calls this sign "the most illegal billboard in America."

The summer of 2007 wasn't the first time the county relinquished control to

the cities regarding billboards along I-95. In 1981, Metro-Dade County allowed cities to opt out of its highway advertising ban. Soon afterward, "along the Palmetto, in Hialeah, Hialeah Gardens, Medley, a veritable forest of billboards came out of the ground and they are there, legally, to this day," recalls lobbyist Dusty Melton.

County commissioners Beverly Phillips and Harvey Ruvin regretted that law. So they pushed to resume control over expressway billboards and raise the minimum standards countywide — outright banning balloon signs, rooftop signs, and most electronic signs whether or not they were next to highways.

The more powerful sign code was passed by the county commission in

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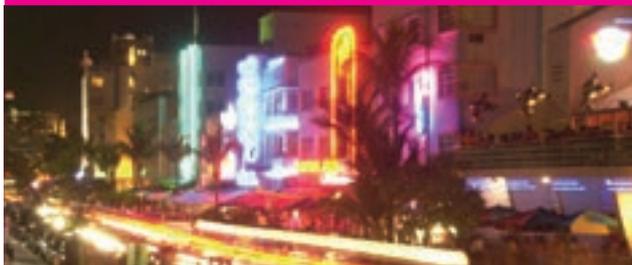


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1350 N. Miami Ave.: Bacardi has spared no cost in getting your attention — all over town.

Billboard Jungle

Continued from page 42

1985. However, the law permitted the City of Miami to allow exactly ten more billboards on the west side of I-95 from just three billboard companies: Flutie Outdoor, Ackerley Outdoor, and E.A. Hancock Outdoor Advertising. The west side requirement was meant to protect panoramic views of Biscayne Bay and Miami Beach that still existed at that time. Lobbyist Dusty Melton helped make the deal happen. Melton calls it the “Great Billboard Compromise of 1985.”

“The understanding was that these were the last ten billboards west of I-95, and that remained true for about the next 15 years,” Melton says. “And then Carter started selling new expressway billboards on the east side of I-95.”

Melton is referring to Carter Outdoor, a Fort Myers billboard company that began applying for billboard permits in 1997 along the east side of I-95. In spite of the Great Compromise, the City of Miami and the state granted permits to Carter for additional billboards near I-95.

Soon Carter was putting up billboards on the east side of the interstate. Other companies followed Carter’s lead and began constructing billboards east of I-95. A *Miami New Times* article noted that by the year 2000, instead of the intended 10 billboards, there were 31 along the interstate within Miami city limits.

This angered Melton and led to his break-up with the billboard industry. “It aggravated me for a couple of reasons,” he explains. “First, I’m a big fan of the rule of law. I think corporations should obey the law, especially since they *know* they’re breaking the law. Second, as one of the authors of the sign code, I was personally offended that the billboard companies were not following the rules that the entire industry agreed to follow.”

Biscayne Times contributor Frank Rollason, a former Miami assistant city manager, and now interim manager for North Bay Village, says some billboard companies didn’t even bother to get permits.

What motivated this billboard frenzy? Money. Rollason recalls overhearing a conversation between two billboard executives. One of them mentioned that he sold two nearby billboards for \$10 million. “Wow, that told me something,” Rollason says. “You don’t spend \$10 million for two billboards if you’re not raking in big bucks.”

By 2002, city officials had had enough. They issued citations on more than 100 billboards, and did so in a rush to beat pending state legislation that would require cities to pay compensation for billboards removed from the public right-of-way. Soon the city was tangling in court with the three biggest billboard

Continued on page 45

companies in the Magic City — National (later CBS) Outdoor, Clear Channel, and Carter. Circuit court judges ruled in favor of Miami in all three cases.

“The City of Miami kept on winning,” Brinton says. “They were close to becoming billboard-free.”

But the billboard companies kept appealing to higher courts. Eventually, Miami decided to settle all three cases.

Avra Jain doesn't just renovate old motels along Biscayne Boulevard. Her development acumen includes building walls for mural ads. Specifically a wall next to I-195's exit ramp for the Design District, Midtown, and Wynwood.

The mural space is part of a two-story, 20,000-square-foot building that now houses a furniture showroom for Clima Outdoor and Alno Kitchens at 3650 N. Miami Ave. Jain and Mark Van Fossen bought the building for \$2.7 million in August 2011, according to county records. They sold it in May 2013 for \$5.5 million. Between buying it and selling it, in March 2012, Miami-Dade County included the building within the city's mural district.

Van Fossen sells outdoor advertising space in various cities around the country, along with Barry Rush, an ad exec who is infamous in Los Angeles for his battles with that city regarding outdoor ads. (In Miami, Rush's company, World Wide Rush, is represented by attorney Lucia Dougherty and political consultant François Ilias.)

Jain says that the mural component actually made the N. Miami Avenue property more valuable. She also adds that murals are beneficial to condo owners, too. “I live in 900 Biscayne, and the murals [attached to it] subsidize the building's maintenance,” she notes. “The murals at Marina Blue get about \$300,000 a year and it doesn't go to one person. All 500 units get a piece of that.”

One of the property owners benefiting from murals is Miami-Dade County itself. The county's North Loop Cooling Plant in Miami has a giant mural on it that faces I-395. “The city has just been thumbing its nose at the county over this for years,” says former Miami administrator Rollason. “The county has backed off — because they have joined in.”

Mural lobbyist Dougherty points out that a recent poll conducted by public radio station WLRN-FM revealed that a majority of listeners who responded

thought the cooling plant looked better with an iPad mural than without it.

But not all buildings look like the county's chiller plant, counters historian Arva Moore Park. “Some of our new buildings, what you're doing to them...” she says with a sigh. “You're hiding some of our better-looking buildings with signs.”

So what do Miami officials think of outdoor advertisements?

Mayor Tomás Regalado, who supported the media tower deal with Siffin in 2010, claiming it would “create jobs,” says that since Miami is a world-class city, “we can't ignore the advertising.” But because the billboards are tied to complicated settlement agreements and long-term leases with property owners, the mayor says there's not much he can do: “Do we have in some areas, too many? Yes we do, but again, that is due to contracts that the city has entered into throughout the years.”

Commissioner Francis Suarez, who is running against Regalado in November for the mayor's seat, voted in favor of city codes allowing LED advertisements in Miami, including Siffin's media tower proposal. Yet Mike Llorente, Suarez's chief of staff, insists the commissioner opposed other efforts to expand advertising in the city “behind the scenes,” and voted against measures to allow advertisements on parking meters (which passed in spite of his No vote).

And Sarnoff? Would he support a complete ban on outdoor advertising in Miami? The commissioner says he'd regret the city losing out on \$4 million from outdoor advertisement permits. He also doubts such a measure would get much support at city hall.

“If I were the dictator of Miami, lord and master, lots of things would be different,” he jokes. “But I'm not the declared lord and master. I have to work with my colleagues. The best thing I can do is heavily regulate something, and the city's mural ordinance is probably the most heavily regulated ever seen.”

Peter Ehrlich of Scenic Miami was once an aide to Sarnoff, but on this subject they sharply disagree. “Residents and tourists are not asking for more visual pollution,” Ehrlich says. “The only people asking for more billboards are billboard lobbyists and out-of-state billboard companies. Elected officials need to listen to their constituents. Elected officials need the courage to just say No.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Upper Eastside Rising

After years of false starts, a development boom is taking hold in the neighborhood

By **Erik Bojnansky**
BT Senior Writer

If the Miami City Commission fully approves a “special area plan” agreement with Dacra CEO Craig Robins in September, he’ll have the right to build a 1.4 million-square-foot luxury retail shopping destination on 21 acres of land in the Design District. As a point of comparison, the Village of Merrick Park in Coral Gables has about 740,000 square feet of retail. The Bal Harbour Shops, once its expansion is complete,

the tallest building on Biscayne Boulevard north of the MacArthur Causeway. Under current zoning, Robins will be able to build up to 20 stories.

Robins started renovating historic properties in Miami Beach in 1987, and in the Design District in 1995. When he does break ground on Tuttle Street, it will be his first project in the Upper Eastside, a stretch that spans from 37th to 87th streets along Biscayne Boulevard. It’s an area that has attracted boutique shops, acclaimed restaurants, and middle-class homebuyers since the



Morningside Center will bring new retailers to the MiMo Biscayne Historic District.

will be 700,000 square feet in size.

Not that Robins is waiting for his latest plan to be approved. (A more modest version of the special area plan was approved by the city last year.) Robins and his partner, the luxury goods conglomerate LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, have already turned the Design District into one big construction site, as crews gut and demolish buildings and excavate land for hundreds of underground parking spaces.

But it hasn’t been all clear sailing for Dacra.

Following opposition from neighborhood groups and the City of Miami’s planning board, Dacra withdrew a request for zoning that would have allowed for the construction of a residential tower as tall as 48 stories on nearly two acres of land at 3720 Biscayne Blvd. At that height, Dacra’s project, called Tuttle Street Village, would have been

1990s. But development? Not so much.

Between 2000 and 2008, when 35,600 new residential units were being built in the City of Miami, only a handful of them were on the Upper Eastside. Several projects proposed during that period died, among them Eric Silverman’s efforts to bring the Vagabond Motel, built in 1953, to its former glory, which ended with the property being abandoned and boarded up for more than four years.

High-rise ventures, such as Kubik at 5582 NE 4th Ct. and Oasis on the Bay at 7951 NE Bayshore Ct., were slowed down by wary neighbors, and ultimately derailed by the economic recession.

Owners of the old INS building are converting it to residences and ground-floor retail, and building a new west wing.



Baltus House teams Jorge Perez and Spain’s Baltus furniture designers.



Baltus House: Residents will look over Bay Point and Morningside to the bay.

Additionally, in 2010, a 35-foot height limit was put in place for the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District, located between 50th and 77th streets. Critics of the measure claimed the height limit would scare developers away from the district.

Nevertheless, development is now coming to the Upper Eastside — in a big way. Among the projects that

have been announced or broken ground in the past year:

Baltus House at 4300 Biscayne Blvd. The 15-story condominium project with 167 residences will be built next to an office building that once served as the headquarters for Miami-Dade County

Public Schools. The Related Group bought the one-acre vacant lot for \$6.6 million in October 2012.

Morningside Center at 5445 Biscayne Blvd. Ruben and Gladys Matz plan to build a 20,000-square-foot retail complex with a roof garden. Tony Cho, president and CEO of Metro 1 Properties, says he’s already talking with “several different retailers” interested in leasing one of the seven spaces that will be offered in the structure, designed by architect Dean Lewis.

Stephen’s International Motel at 6320 Biscayne Blvd. Developer Avra Jain has plans to renovate the 67-year-old motel after she bought it for \$1.2 million this past May.

The Vagabond and Royal motels at 7301 and 7411 Biscayne Blvd. Stephen’s International isn’t Jain’s only

Continued on page 52

It's a Shoal Thing

For decades boaters have gathered at the Haulover Sandbar for fun and relaxation — plus a little rowdiness

By **Harriette Yahr**
Special to the *BT*

Summer in Miami. Crowded beaches, crowded malls, and crowded... shoals. Look west over the Collins Avenue bridge that spans the Haulover Inlet, or glance north while traversing Broad Causeway, and you can't miss the sea of boats that gather in Biscayne Bay. South Florida has a bevy of hangouts at islands and shoals. Think Nixon Beach or Stiltsville Flats near Key Biscayne, or Nest Key in Key Largo.

The Haulover Sandbar, sandwiched between the ocean inlet and Sandspur Island (also called Beer Can Island), draws

diving and spearfishing. "It's always been a place to relax and enjoy time with friends. But I can't say it's the same place as it's always been."

Today the current has shifted, bringing more than just sand from Bal Harbour's beach to form the sandbar. Crowds have increased. Decibels have escalated. As a result, a mutiny is in progress.

"It's turned into a zoo," complains David Templer, a North Miami Beach resident and Aventura attorney, who says "friendly boater etiquette has all but disappeared at the Haulover Sandbar." He echoes the sentiment of several old-timers who want the culture of the sandbar to return to the days of respect-thy-neighbor.



With so many boats so close together, an inexperienced or impaired skipper can cause trouble.

weekend crowds in the hundreds. At low tide the exposed sand can stretch out long enough to toss a Frisbee. It's knee and waist deep for a huge swath, which makes it perfect for lounging the day away.

When nature builds shoals, boaters come out to play. But sometimes they'll have different agendas.

Staci Lurie, a Miami Beach native and Bay Harbor Islands resident who heads out on the water any chance she gets, has been frequenting the Haulover Sandbar for years, when she's not

"There's no need to blast home amplifiers and have triple train-horn contests," says Templer. "It's obnoxious."

What about those boaters who may want to mount loudspeakers on their transoms or dance topless on their bows? Don't they have rights too? Are the folks who complain about noise just a bunch of curmudgeons?

A few years back, Templer, a former North Miami Beach city councilman, thought about starting a coalition to bring civility back to the sandbar. His



Fun and sun on the Haulover Sandbar, with Collins Avenue and Bal Harbour in the background.



David Templer: "There's no need to blast home amplifiers and have triple train-horn contests. It's obnoxious."

kids, he says, weren't enjoying themselves there any longer. So he spoke to friends, created a Facebook page, and contacted law enforcement.

Multiple public agencies have jurisdiction in Biscayne Bay. Templer says his concerns, and those of a few others, sometimes "fell on deaf ears," but some agencies were receptive, such as the Miami-Dade County Marine Patrol. But when the economy tanked, Templer said he was told budget cuts meant less manpower — and they are the ones with the

jet skis to get into the shallow depths.

Miami-Dade Marine Patrol Lt. John Ramos also talks about relativity and priorities. These days, out at Virginia Key, there's a sea of blaring noise complaints from boaters blasting DJ equipment using home generators. At the same time, Ramos says they take every complaint they get seriously and have two marine officers dedicated to the Haulover area on the weekend. Jet skis are now back,

Continued on page 48

Courtesy of Coast Guard Auxiliary

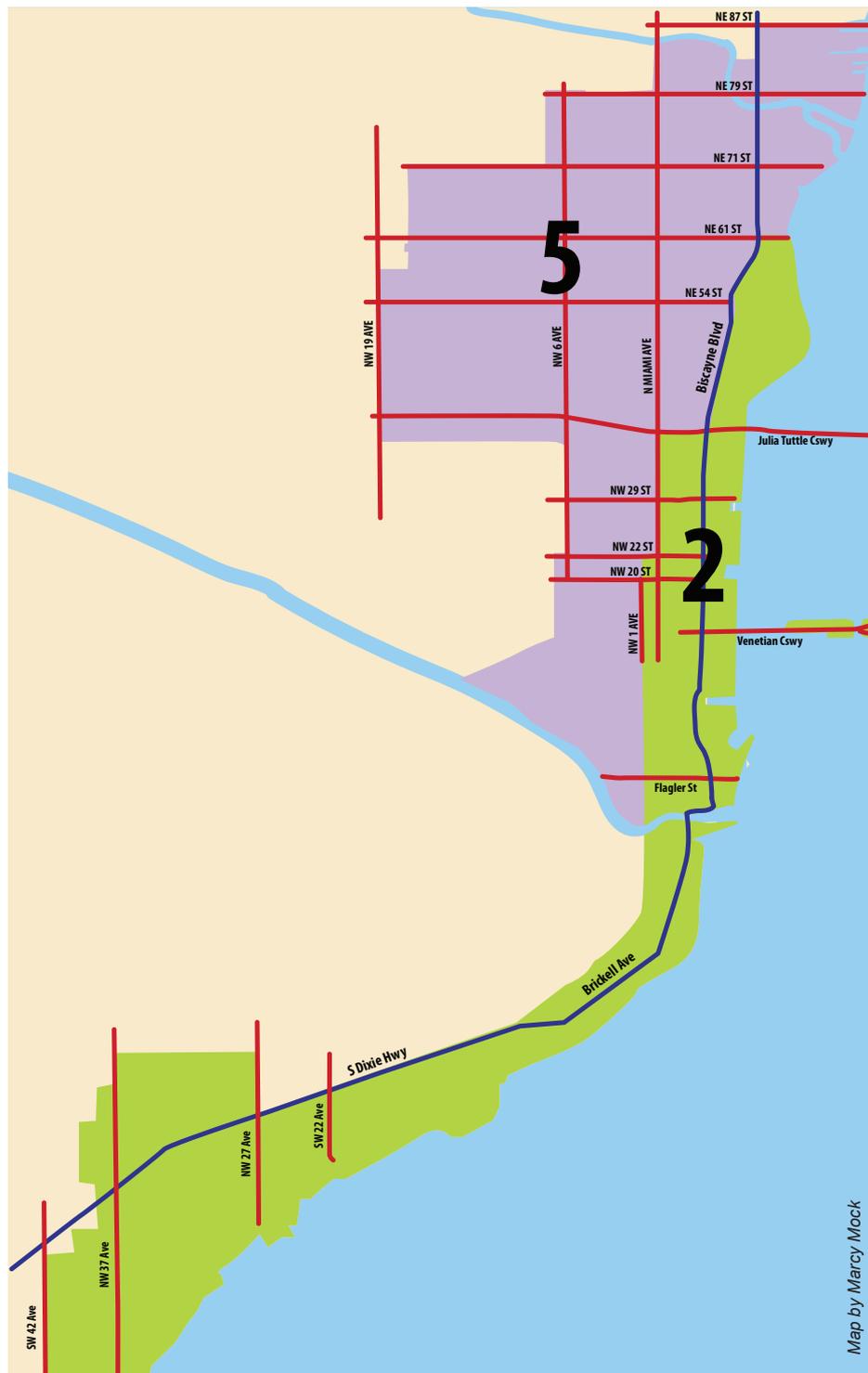
Courtesy of David Templer

Goodbye 2, Hello 5

In Miami's Upper Eastside, NE 61st Street is the new line of demarcation

A contentious redistricting process ended with Miami's Upper Eastside being divided. Everyone living north of NE 61st Street is now part of city commission District 5, while those to the south

remain in District 2. District 5 Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones has been termed out, leaving the seat open for a November 5 election. So far, two candidates are running: Richard Dunn and Robert Malone.



Map by Marcy Mock

Shoal Thing

Continued from page 47

assigned to the Intracoastal district, he says, and they patrol the area randomly.

Perhaps there isn't anything too unusual going on. Jorge Pino, a Florida Fish and Wildlife marine officer, says it doesn't appear there is anything out of the ordinary at the sandbar. "We always have boaters that go out to enjoy themselves and abide by rules, and we have a select few that will be intoxicated," Pino explains. "It is no different than any other location with hundreds of people gathering where there is alcohol."

Pino adds that, although FWC has jurisdiction in the Haulover area, they concern themselves with conservation, safety, and watercraft issues — and not noise. Ramos says patrols at Haulover have also increased with the addition of the Joint Marine Protection Act, which "provides municipal law enforcement agencies on the water jurisdiction to enforce the laws in that area," he explains.

Maybe it's really a matter of boaters learning how to share the bay.

At TheHullTruth.com, rants about general sandbar etiquette are posted. On the Haulover thread, you'll find references to "idiots" who don't know how to boat. "Just keep an eye on Fu#%ing stupid boaters that ran over your anchor line. Those kind of idiots have put my boat adrift on 2 or 3 different occasions," opines JoseG.

RedSlayer069's advice for a good time at Haulover? "Go during the week if possible, it's usually a little more tolerable. On teacher work days the place is almost deserted, that's when I bring my kids and their friends."

So must you love it or leave it?

Jenna Williams is a huge fan. In the running for Queen of the Sandbar, Williams heads out early — with her crew of regulars and floating lounge chairs — to claim her coveted spot on the sand, as she's been doing for the past 13 years. "The scenery is breathtaking, the water is beautiful," she says. "Living in Florida, there's no other place I want to be on the weekends except there." To Williams, the scene is actually "more under control today than in the past." The music, she agrees, can be obnoxious, but she focuses on having a good time: "We try not to let other people influence what our day is going to be like."

Check Facebook and Yelp for Haulover Sandbar devotees of all persuasions.

"Kayaked our way over from Oleta, tied up to a friend's boat and had a great time. This is what South Florida is all about. Picture perfect," writes Monika K.

Crowds, beer, manatees, inflatable canoes delivering hot dogs, the chance see a topless woman, and sometimes even the music are the draws for some.

David Templer, on the other hand, has cast off and charted a new course. He is still enjoying weekends on the water. That part hasn't changed. But now he anchors south of the Haulover Sandbar at a place called the Shallows. Several friends have joined the defection. "There's no exposed sand for the dogs to run," he concedes, "but it's less crowded and quieter. We're not getting blared out or run over by a rogue boater."

Legend has it that Haulover got its name from a fisherman named Baker who, in the early 1800s, would "haul" his boat and others over a narrow stretch of beach sand between the ocean and Biscayne Bay.

Martha Saconchik-Pytel, who spent a decade researching material for her book *Baker's Haulover: A Maritime Treas-*

Will inexperienced or impaired boaters run over too many anchors, igniting a high-seas brawl, triggering a ban on alcohol?

sure of History and Pioneers, quashes that idea. "In the absence of in-depth, historic evidence and investigation, the namesake of this place had always remained a mystery," she writes.

The Baker's Haulover Inlet (the official name of the cut) was created in 1925, providing direct access from bay to ocean. Saconchik-Pytel recounts powerboat races in the 1950s around the site of today's sandbar. "Fellows would begin to race up the waterway, out to sea, and back through the Baker's Haulover Inlet," she writes.

Not all memories are fond ones. For one thing, the currents can be treacherous. "It was the only time in my life I really thought I was going to die," says local film producer Adam Rogers, recalling a nighttime swim in the 1990s. "The boat wasn't very far from the sandbar, but the current was so strong I could

Continued on page 50

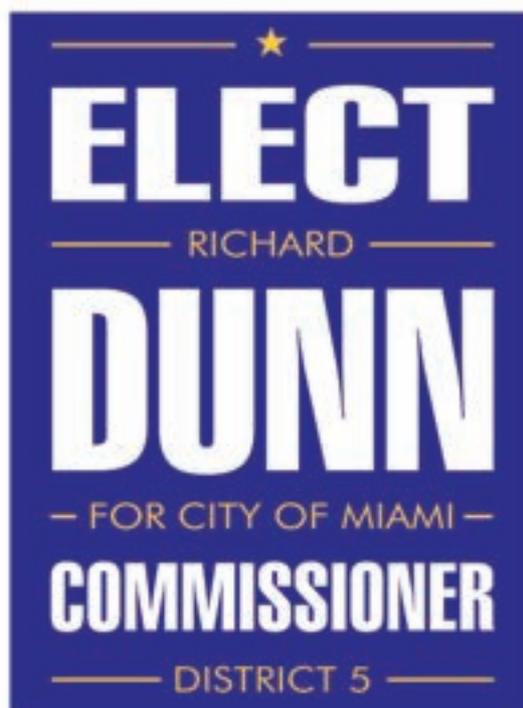
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Courtesy of Martha Saconchik-Pytel and Miami-Dade County



Courtesy of Google Earth

Aerial view of Haulover Inlet in 1947, with massive sandbar clearly evident.

The inlet today, with sandbar, Intracoastal boat channel, and Sandspur Island.

Shoal Thing

Continued from page 48

barely make it back to the boat.”

The sandbar can be precarious for other reasons. Mariners entering Biscayne Bay from the Atlantic Ocean through Haulover Inlet need to steer clear. And persistent shoaling — from the sandbar encroaching on the Intracoastal Waterway’s boat

channel — is an ongoing problem. A recent Coast Guard alert reported depths of less than four feet during low tide near the center of the channel. Several vessels have run aground in the area.

To alleviate this navigational hazard, the United States Army Corps of Engineers periodically dredges the channel. Brian Flynn of the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory

and Economic Resources says the next dredge is scheduled for October.

The Army Corps won’t touch the sandbar, which they did back in 1999, Flynn says, because of an endangered species of seagrass that is protected by federal law. And there is another reason. The thousands of cubic yards of sand that will be scooped out of the channel will be dumped onto Bal Harbour beach,

which is desperate for sand in some parts. Regulations limit the level of silt allowed in beach sand, Flynn explains, and the sandbar’s level exceeds that.

Even if the beloved party sandbar ends up dredged one day, everything will be fine in the end, says David Halpryn, a Miami Beach native and avid

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April 2009: This shot by an unidentified photographer shows the sandbar in full swing.

fisherman who has enjoyed Biscayne Bay since he was a kid. He's watched the ebb and the flow of the Haulover scene for close to 40 years. "The sands will find their way back in through the inlet," he says. "Mother Nature always wins."

Today Halpryn has defected with Templer to the Shallows, "where the water is calm, as are the few others looking to

escape the madness of the main sandbar."

So what is to come of the Haulover Sandbar culture? Will the boaters with the biggest speakers prevail? Will inexperienced or impaired boaters one day run over too many anchors, igniting a high-seas brawl? Or worse, triggering a ban on alcohol? Or will the party-lovers keep their activity — and volume — to a low din and not stir the pot?



Sometimes the sandbar is for the birds, and the birds alone.

While the great debate over rules of conduct plays itself out in the middle of Biscayne Bay, perhaps everyone can agree to let the folks who'd like to enjoy a peaceful day on the water have their space, and listen to their own music, a few buoys south.

Martha Saconchik-Pytel will read from and sign copies of her book Baker's

Haulover: A Maritime Treasure of History and Pioneers on Tuesday, September 10, 2:00 p.m. at the North Miami Beach Public Library, 1601 NE 164th St., 305-787-6048; and Thursday, September 12, 6:00 p.m. at the Brockway Memorial Library, 10021 NE 2nd Ave., Miami Shores, 305-758-8107.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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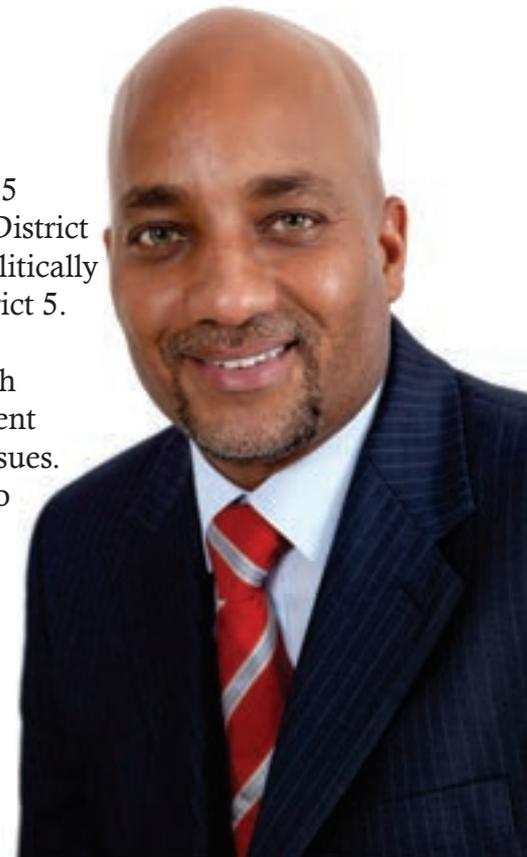
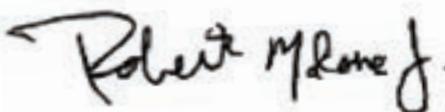
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After redistricting, Belle Meade, Bayside, Palm Grove and Shorecrest are now part of the District 5 family of neighborhoods. For good measure, the Buena Vista neighborhoods, the Miami Design District and most of Wynwood were also added. By and large, these neighborhoods have been ignored politically but this November election is different. It is your voice that will help determine the future of District 5.

I was born and raised in District 5. In Liberty City, where I live, we have many of same issues such as high crime, lacking infrastructure, poor public transit and the loss of public land. As the President of the Hadley Park Homeowners Association, I have experience working with the city on these issues. As an educator, I teach youth how to make it through school, through college and in life. I want to be a voice on the commission that represents everyone regardless of socio-economic background.

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Architect Dean Lewis has designed a leafy roof garden atop Morningside Center.

Rising

Continued from page 46

property in the Upper Eastside. She bought the boarded-up Vagabond for \$1.9 million in September 2012. Eight months later she bought the Royal

Motel for \$1.5 million. Her intention: to fix up both 1950s properties and run them as a single boutique operation.

6405 Biscayne Blvd. Lyle Chariff, owner of Chariff Realty Group, tells the *BT* he plans to erect a 10,000-square-foot retail building on this vacant parcel with



Avra Jain is restoring the Vagabond Motel to its former glory, which looked like this.

his partner, Alex Karakhanian. Chariff and Karakhanian bought the property from South American investors for \$1.2 million in December 2012.

Chase Bank at 6800 Biscayne Blvd. The bank, which opened for business on

Continued on page 53

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6405 Biscayne Blvd.: The new owners are developing 10,000 square feet of retail.

July 23, was built on the site of a former BP gas station that Clearwater-based Boos Development bought for \$3 million in August 2012.

50 Eggs at 7350 Biscayne Blvd.
Restaurateur John Kunkel bought the 74-year-old building, formerly the

Sunshine Motel, for \$3.5 million from Chariff and Karakhanian in December 2012. Kunkel, who used proceeds from his \$24-million sale of the Lime Fresh Mexican Grill restaurant chain to start eateries such as Swine in Coral Gables and Khong River House and Yardbird



Dramatic makeover: The old INS building is will become mixed-use residential.

Southern Table and Bar in Miami Beach, will utilize the top two floors as office space. The ground floor will serve as a test kitchen to help culinary students and other restaurant owners hone their craft.

Ms. Cheezious at 7416 Biscayne Blvd. A company owned by Christian Dickens and Brian Mullins bought the 3000-square-foot storefront (on a 7500-square-foot lot) for \$537,500 this

Continued on page 54

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The view along NE 79th Street shows a new wing of residential and commercial.



First phase of Biscayne Plaza's redo includes these retail spaces off NE 81st Street.

Rising

Continued from page 53

past March in a bid to create the brick-and-mortar version of the Ms. Cheezious food truck the duo started three years ago. They hope to open in December, according to the foodie blog Eater.

Jugofresh at 7501 Biscayne Blvd. Matthew Sherman, owner of the South Beach-based juice bar, bought this former KFC-turned-taco stand for \$960,000 this past June, according to the Miami Urbanist blog. Sherman plans to open six other Jugofresh restaurants in Miami and Miami Beach. The MiMo location will open in 2014.

7880 Biscayne Blvd. This 12-story building, which once housed the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the attached retail strip mall were purchased by Mark and Ian Sanders's Fifteen Group for \$5 million in June 2012. The new owners had been mum on what they planned to do with the property. That ended last month when Fifteen Group announced its intention to convert the office building into a residential tower residential tower with retail space on the ground floor. Construction of an eight-story mixed-use addition on

Continued on page 55



This 13,000-square-foot building will expand the Antiques & Design Center footprint.

the towers west side will add up to 295 residential units and 32,800 square feet of commercial space. Justin Toal, chief investment officer for the Fifteen Group, says construction of the project, designed by ADD Inc., will commence in late 2013 or early 2014.

Biscayne Plaza Shopping Center at 79th Street and Biscayne Boulevard Global Fund Investments bought the 59-year-old, 347,000-square-foot, open-air mall and 18 acres of land for \$12 million this past March. Five storefronts facing Biscayne Boulevard, north of 81st Street, have already been remodeled, says Stephen Frazier, the company's real estate manager. Meanwhile, 100,000 square feet of aging retail, located on the corner of 79th Street and the Boulevard, will be demolished by the end of the year. In its place will be a CVS drug-store, which is scheduled to be completed in 2015.

Shorecrest Luxury Apartments at 7950 NE Bayshore Ct. The former site of the planned Oasis on the Bay was taken over in May 2012 by the Adler Group, which intends to build two 20-story apartment towers with 455 units. The real estate blog Curbed Miami reported that construction commenced in April.

Antiques & Design Center at 8690 Biscayne Blvd. The retail complex that is home to 15 specialty furniture and design stores will be growing by another 13,000 square feet. To accommodate the expansion, an adjacent, abandoned gas station will be demolished. "We hope to have a permit in hand and break ground by the end of August," says Danny Reyes, president of Regaland Properties. This will be the Antique & Design Center's second expansion in two years. Once complete, the complex will have 39,500 square feet of retail space.

So why is this development boom occurring now? "Part of the reason is the spillover from the Design District," explains Avra Jain, who, in addition to her Boulevard acquisitions, also owns a 4000-square-foot parcel with Lyle Chariff in the Design District, as well as properties near Midtown Miami. "Businesses are being pushed out [of the Design District]. Restaurants are looking for a new home. You can already see furniture stores up and down Biscayne and filling up the Upper Eastside."

Jain notes there's also a new wave of migration of Miami Beach residents to the Upper Eastside: "A lot of my friends have crossed over the water. They sold their homes, and they're buying homes in Morningside and Belle Meade."

The gentrification of Wynwood is yet another factor making the Upper Eastside a more tempting

Tony Cho: "There is definitely some major investment that has been happening in the Upper Eastside that's spurring demand."

destination, adds Tony Cho of Metrol Properties. "It's definitely created opportunity for the Upper Eastside to become more viable for retail," he says. "And there is definitely some major investment that has been happening in the Upper Eastside that's spurring that demand."

Reyes of Regaland Properties, however, believes it's rising interest rates that are influencing the buying trend. Investors want to get in before rates go even higher, he ventures. At the same time, they're confident that property values will continue to go up.

The most attractive properties, Reyes argues, are vacant parcels, where something new can be built, even if the height is limited to 35 feet. "I know at one point there were 13 empty lots in the Upper Eastside," he says. "I think that number has definitely shrunk by half."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Last Word

Our Belle Meade correspondent trades his keyboard for a new challenge

By Frank Rollason
BT Contributor

As the saying goes, all good things come to an end. And thus, I am informing all my loyal readers (and those not so loyal, but readers anyway) that this will be my last column for the near future. I have accepted the position of interim village manager for North Bay Village and, as such, it would be inappropriate for me to continue to write a column that at times has been controversial, to say the least.

My columns have been known to upset an elected official or government administrator from time to time, as I would royally skewer them for some

action that I deemed asinine, impractical, illegal, stupid, selfish, unconscionable, sneaky, wasteful, and/or some combination of all of the above. Therefore, being that I am now in a quasi-political role as an appointee of an elected body, I must sever my relationship with the *BT*.

Now, to be fair, not all of my columns have focused on politics. I have written about shops along the Boulevard in the Upper Eastside. I have written about crime. I've even written a couple of columns about sea-level rise and the impact that it is having on the southeastern coast of Florida. It's a fact, folks, whether you believe it is a manmade condition or just part of a cycle the earth goes through every few million years:

The oceans are rising.

The Army Corps of Engineers predicts that, in as few as 17 years from now, sea level will rise two to three feet, which will most certainly be catastrophic for our low-lying communities. It is incumbent upon all of us to stay abreast of this subject and recognize that we, as human beings, have a responsibility to preserve our earth for future generations of humans.

Don't bury your head in the sand. (It won't do any good; the sand will be under water.) Pay attention and engage all of our elected officials to aggressively address this issue at the federal, state, county, and local levels.

Another subject that I have written about is the county commission's action, in 1997, to change the name of Dade County to Miami-Dade County. (Voters approved the name change.) Here we had



a group of politicians who were more interested in their own egos than the historical significance of how Dade got its name.

For those who don't know, I'll tell you about that name: Maj. Francis

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Langhorne Dade led his troops against the Seminole Indians on a cold morning in December of 1835, starting the Second Seminole War.

As I researched the column I wrote on the subject, I became mesmerized by the recorded testimony of the Indian chiefs who participated in the attack. Halpatter Tustenuggee (“Alligator,” as the white man called him) gave this eyewitness account:

“We had been preparing for more than a year. Just as the day was breaking, we moved out of the swamp, into the pine-barren. I counted, by direction of [Chief John Jumper], 180 warriors. Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side. About nine o’clock in the morning, the command approached. So, soon as all the soldiers were opposite, Jumper gave the whoop. [Chief] Micanopy fired the first rifle [which fell Major Dade], the signal agreed upon, when every Indian arose and fired...”

It’s a chilling account of the attack. The U.S. Army lost 107 men in the battle, the second-deadliest encounter for American troops during the so-called

Indian wars, after Custer’s last stand at the Little Bighorn. In honor of Major Dade, Dade County was established in 1836. In 1997, our county leaders pushed a vote to change the name to Miami-Dade, because they were supposedly sick and tired of having to explain to people outside of South Florida where Dade County was.

For those of us born here, Dade County is a part of our heritage, and its name should not have been altered for the sake of soothing egos, or even economic development. (By the way, the word Miami is the Seminole word for “sweet water” — sound familiar?)

Jim Mullin, publisher and editor of *Biscayne Times*, would always “correct” my columns when I would mention Dade County, dutifully changing it to Miami-Dade County. And I would get on his case, telling him that it would always be Dade to me, sort of like how Sun Life Stadium — or whatever it is they’re calling it this week — will always be Joe Robbie Stadium to me. You see, once you know

how things came to be called what they are called, mere self-serving mortals cannot alter that.

And speaking of Jim Mullin, I would certainly be remiss in not mentioning the admiration I have for this individual. Jim took over this publication from another admirable figure, Skip Van Cel, who, among other things, helped establish Manatee Bend Park on the Little River. Hopefully, as time goes by, there will be

I am not going away. I’m just taking a little respite from my column. Stay well and stay involved. Our communities belong to all of us.

an effort to rename the park Skip Van Cel Manatee Bend Park. That’s a name change that would be for the better. But I digress...

Jim encouraged me to start writing a monthly column back in 2007. He gently nurtured me with subtle comments on how I could improve my writing and, every once in a while, he would tell

me that I was becoming a “pretty good writer.” That is probably the highest compliment that I have ever heard him utter — at least to me!

Jim has been a tireless champion of this paper, which has grown in size and circulation owing primarily to his blood, sweat, and tears. Thank you, Jim, for your years of support and encouragement. I know sometimes my columns have brought the heat to your backside, but you have never wavered in your support, nor have you ever even suggested that I lay off any particular individual or topic. For that I am grateful.

And so, dear readers, I am not going away. I’m just taking a little respite from my column. I look forward to serving the residents of North Bay Village as interim village manager, and I will try to do there what I have always done in my columns — respect the intelligence and judgment of the people I am communicating with, tell it like it is, and work for the common good.

Stay well and stay involved. Our communities belong to all of us.

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True Crime Tales

When it comes to hustlers, liars, and lawbreakers, we could write a book

By **Jay Beskin**
BT Contributor

The June 10 and 17 edition of *The New Yorker* featured one of those long, nail-sucking, chin-pulling expositions that passes for original thought in a certain type of high middle-brow magazine. The subject: juxtaposing Miami crime fiction against the Los Angeles noir tradition.

The writer, Adam Gopnik, twisted and turned his way through one of those thin theories that makes more and more confident assertions as it departs further and further from simple logic. Most ridiculous of all, he sought some thread of commonality between the classic Travis McGee novels of John D. MacDonald

and the goofy misadventures penned by Dave Barry.

This is like trying to draw a line from Damon Runyon's New York gangsters to those of Mario Puzo. Anyone who has actually read these books knows that the Travis McGee series featured smart criminals, with smarter detectives, while Dave Barry's lawbreakers and law enforcers are tripping over each other's feet in any orgy of incompetence. Indeed it is fair to say MacDonald's books are detective fiction while Barry's are crime fiction; not even the same genre.

In trying to limn the outlines of this pattern he perceived, Gopnik described a world with a set of identifiable parameters: "In the Florida-glare novel of the past thirty years, nothing connects



but everything coincides.... This is a society without basic repressions. There are no dirty secrets.... Not movies but television — in particular, tabloid reality television — hangs over everything, as an aspiration and a model for life. The cop or, more frequently, the reporter isn't trying to restore chivalry to a world gone corrupt. It's too far gone already...." As is the prose in *The New Yorker*, one fears.

Still, this silly effort does goad us into revisiting our Miami crime

traditions, particularly, the Aventura variety.

We have always had our fair share of criminal behavior in the Miami area, always with a locally idiosyncratic flavor, partly because many of the developers who built the place up were scammers and schemers themselves. Often these sharpies managed to enrich their customers despite their own larcenous hearts.

As early as 1905, O. Henry's "gentle grafter" Jeff Peters is selling land that

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winds up being under Lake Okeechobee. In his autobiography, *A Child of the Century*, Ben Hecht tells of his pre-Hollywood years spent here alongside Herman Mankiewicz, the two of them writing copy to lure prospective real-estate buyers, then joining them on lavish bacchanalian weekends in Havana to seal the deal.

Once Hecht asked Samuel Ort, who developed Key Largo, how he got his first investors. Ort explained there was a popular gypsy fortuneteller in Miami with a storefront where she held readings. Tourists all stopped there to drop a few dollars on a rosy rendition of what the future held. Ort paid her off to tell them she saw a man in a winter coat bringing them prosperity. Then Ort, dressed in a winter coat, would position himself just down the street, innocently staring into a store window. Naturally, the suckers would approach, asking what business he was in.

There were lots of wacky crimes here over the years. Back in 1932, author Haden Clark was found dead after stealing the wife of the famed aviator Bill Lancaster. Although it was Lancaster's gun that was used in the crime, and Lancaster

admitted to forging Clark's suicide note, he was acquitted of murder. Less than a year later, in February 1933, a crazed anarchist tried to assassinate president-elect Franklin Roosevelt in Miami's Bayfront Park, but his wayward bullet killed the mayor of Chicago instead.

Our most bizarre local crime was bloodless. In 1950 the Brassiere Brigade was a group of girls hired to count nickels from payphones. Since no one knew how many nickels there were until the girls entered their tallies, they simply skimmed a few coins a day and carried the loot out in their underwear. Before long, these working girls were buying houses and boats. The police only caught on when one of the girls reported a robbery, and the cops who answered the call walked into a house piled high with hot, hard change.

Which brings us to Aventura. We became the epicenter of a national scandal in 1987 when a boat called *Monkey Business* got into some monkey business. The aforementioned yacht was custom built by the developers of the Turnberry Isle Resort and had been used by noted celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor and Julio Iglesias. Like the, shall we say, "social

gatherings" at Turnberry Isle at the time, the *Monkey Business* was renowned more for discretion than valor. The onboard parties tended toward the lively.

Gary Hart appeared to be the Democratic favorite to challenge George H.W. Bush for the presidency in 1988. He seemed youthful and vigorous in a manner reminiscent of John F. Kennedy. He also spoke of bringing "new ideas" to the table. His wife, on the other hand, always looked like she was close to a good cry. Her mopey demeanor lent credence to the rumors of his philandering. He denied all and issued a challenge to the media to place him under surveillance.

When they called his bluff, they caught him cavorting in Washington, D.C., with a model named Donna Rice. Before long, a photograph turned up of Hart wearing a *Monkey Business Crew* T-shirt and cradling the pulchritudinous Ms. Rice in his lap on a dock in Bimini. The episode ended Hart's presidential aspirations.

A more disturbing Aventura mystery occurred the same year, again tangentially involving the elder Bush. The federal government had purchased several Cigarette boats built by local speedboat legend

Don Aronow. They were designed to intercept drug smugglers. Aronow called one boat the *Blue Thunder*, and Vice President Bush came down for a highly photographed ride aboard this sleek new weapon in the war on drugs.

Migrating to Florida from New Jersey while in his late 20s, Aronow had created the dead-end stretch of NE 188th Street known as Thunderboat Alley, the mecca of speedboat manufacturing. He'd become a multi-millionaire by starting a number of boat-building companies, selling a few boats, and eventually selling the company.

His plan was to go back into the business as soon as his noncompete clause expired. But somewhere along the way, Aronow stepped on the wrong toes, and a hit man killed him while he sat in his car on Thunderboat Alley.

The unmaking of a presidential candidate, the audacious execution of a speedboat king, young women who smuggled thousands of dollars in nickels home in their underwear? That's stranger than any fiction dreamed up by crime writers in Miami or Los Angeles. And it's all true.

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Ride the High Road

Miami Critical Mass needs to reassess its tactics if it wants a bike-friendly city

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

It's Friday night. Do you know where the cyclists are? This has become a burning question for residents of the Upper Eastside on the last Friday of every month, when Critical Mass occasionally pedals through the most populated streets of Miami.

This is also when motorists and pedestrians play a game called "Trapped," depending on where they are when bicyclists convene like black clouds in a thunderstorm, then start to move, more or less loosely, as one body. Miami's drivers, if they're lucky, have arrived safely at their destinations by the time

the storm descends. If not, they're sidelined at intersections (along with pedestrians) by a flash flood of human-powered wheels.

Currently, Miami Critical Mass (MCM) rides a 12- to 18-mile loop, leaving from Government Center in downtown at 7:15 p.m. Although there is a Facebook page with approximately 6000 members, Critical Mass, by nature, is mob-run. No formal organizers. No permits. No police. No widely publicized routes in advance of a ride.

Now just over two decades old, Critical Mass began in San Francisco as a protest movement — stop using cars to pollute, start using bikes to commute — with bicyclists intentionally roaming the



Courtesy of transitmiami.com

most congested parts of the city. Despite its anarchical vibe (during the inaugural event, the back window of a family's car was smashed), the education-by-action worked. San Francisco now ranks third on the list of bike-friendliest communities in America.

As a result, pro-bike groups all over the globe have put the "Share the Roads" mantra into similar practice. Critical Mass, no matter where it takes place, draws attention to the lack of bike lanes, the slack enforcement of traffic laws that

call for motorists to share the road with cyclists, and the harmful effects of fossil fuels. In Miami, the fourth-deadliest city for cyclists in the nation, the ride also highlights a growing concern about the absence of easily accessed mass transit.

The major problem with MCM is that, while classic methods were adopted, they weren't adapted. The issue here is more complex than motorists and cyclists learning how to tolerate each other in traffic. Many of our citizens and visitors originally gained drivers' licenses in

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their home countries (or they drive illegally). The June ride had an estimated 3500 or so participants, according to TheMiamiBikeScene.com, and traffic was tied up in the Upper Eastside for close to an hour by the tide of bicycles. Those who don't know, don't care about, or never followed American traffic laws in the first place aren't likely to wait good-naturedly when they can't even see what the snag is.

That snag is a gorgeous manifestation that appears out of nowhere and like any spectacle — say, fireworks — it has its charm. If you're lucky enough to be in front of the pack of halted cars, it's just plain cool to see so many bicyclists of every age take over the streets. But as with fireworks, you don't want to watch the show forever.

MCM's end-of-June ride never seemed to end. Cyclists bringing up the rear believed they could blow through traffic lights with impunity, just like the rest of the pack. Only they didn't have the soldierly protection of lieutenants who "cork" intersections (and don't even do it according to their own guidelines) by parking riders in front of waiting cars

to ensure they can't move. Those riders who failed to keep up were in serious danger of being hit by a car whose driver thought that traffic could flow freely again, or whose patience had failed.

What's more, some riders became unruly. My husband and I, who were trying to turn onto the Venetian Causeway from Biscayne Boulevard, witnessed hundreds of riders cursing — in Spanish and English — at cars, laughing, and giving the middle finger to drivers who were sitting there, helpless.

Most of the cyclists, including many children, were riding without helmets and lights. Plenty were dressed in black or other dark colors that made them difficult to distinguish as night fell. Some actually had beer cans in hand. And they were riding two and three abreast on both sides of the road, not in a single file or only on the right.

One incident that occurred in the Upper Eastside was particularly disturbing. A woman who had been stopped on NE 77th Street, with young, hungry kids waiting for her at home, rolled down the window of her car and pleaded with riders to let her pass. Instead of

displaying the same "Share the Road" compassion for which they are asking, they surrounded her, taunted her, and blew whistles, with one cyclist even daring her to hit him. (To be fair, we also saw cyclists cheerfully waving to motorists and thanking them.)

Of course, people who were late to appointments or reservations or needed to get home to take a dose of medicine tended to return the cyclists' rude gestures with even ruder ones of their own. That evening, a rumor went around Facebook that a cyclist had been intentionally struck by a motorist.

These may seem like isolated occurrences given the scope of MCM — actions from the few rotten apples that poison both camps — but for those experiencing them, they're the sum and total.

MCM supporters have been quick to distance themselves from negativity, with bike-riding and Facebook sites asking those who don't want to follow the rules to stay away or form their own ride. But perhaps they should be asking themselves how to fix what is rapidly becoming an insurmountable PR problem.

It's not enough to post a monthly route on a Website most citizens don't

even know about. In addition to remembering to enforce their own regulations and share the road (as a way to set a good example), MCM needs to assess how to better educate and encourage status-conscious Miamians — many of whom emigrated from countries where riding a bicycle is a sign of poverty — to embrace their two-wheel culture.

Plus, Miamians aren't nearly as earth-friendly as Californians. Getting drivers here to put aside their luxury gas guzzler in favor of a banana seat is going to take more effort. And money.

So how about it, bike riders? Hold a bike "fixie" event. Run bake sales. Ask corporations for donations. While it's true that an evolution of Miami's Critical Mass ride into a sponsored event wouldn't be like other cities' rides, it's also true that Miami is not like other cities.

And by the way, July's ride through Little Havana went much more smoothly, thanks to City of Miami police officers on motorcycles who controlled car traffic at intersections.

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The Age of Consent

A seemingly minor parliamentary procedure has started a war on the city council

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

North Miami City Hall seems so quiet these days. The June 4 runoff election is fading in the rearview mirror, the council is on recess until August 25, the parking lot's half empty, and the sun is brutal.

Time to head for the hills, right?

Are you kidding? This is North Miami. The pot's boiling on many fronts, so let's just start with three: MOCA, the mayoral election challenge, and perhaps most important, the little matter of the city council meeting's consent agenda, a bureaucratic procedure that is way more volatile than it sounds, as the fireworks

at the July 9 council meeting proved.

MOCA: Bonnie Clearwater announced July 17 that she is leaving the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) to run the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale. In 18 years as executive director and chief curator, she built MOCA into a highly respected institution with one of the best community outreach programs anywhere.

She is also a North Miami employee — MOCA is run by the city — so the city council gets to preside over the search for her replacement. Last year voters narrowly defeated a \$15-million bond issue to double the museum's space from its current 7400 square feet. The Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale has 25,000

square feet, and it's owned by Nova Southeastern University.

In the meantime, there's also competition from the mammoth 200,000-square-foot Perez Art Museum Miami, scheduled to open this December at Museum Park downtown. Is it a wonder Clearwater flew the coop?

So what now? Will she take key staff with her? What about key funders and donors? What's the plan for community programs? Whatever the case, the next phase rests not just with the museum's board of directors, but with the city council.

Election Challenge: Mayor Lucie Tondreau, who has built a formidable reputation as a Haitian-American community activist, beat former Mayor Kevin Burns 56-44 percent in the June 4 runoff. Burns promptly hired bigfoot Coral Gables lawyer Joe Klock (who was



North Miami Mayor Lucie Tondreau.

on the winning side in Bush v. Gore back in 2000) to challenge Tondreau's residency with a 92-page lawsuit that claims she actually lives near Ives Dairy Road, well beyond North Miami's city limits.

Burns's motion for summary judgment was scheduled to go before the



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court August 2. Dr. Smith Joseph also has jumped into the case. The North Miami medical doctor came in a respectable third in the first election, on May 14 (grabbing 23 percent of the vote to Burns's 34 percent and Tondreau's 27 percent).

If the court tosses out Tondreau (which I would not lay money on), Joseph is positioning himself to run against Burns in another election. If that happens, it will be at an awkward time. Two big budget hearings are coming up September 11 and 25.

Consent Agenda and Robert's Rules of Order: Big yawn? Not so fast. This might be the biggest enchilada of all. At the July meeting, it led to two of the most explosive hours in recent North Miami City Council history — which is saying something.

Under Robert's Rules, a "consent agenda" allows members to vote on a group of items in a bloc, without discussion. The idea is to take care of noncontroversial stuff, such as approving the minutes and paying the customary bills.

Since this is North Miami, though, it gets tricky. City procedure calls for meetings to be run in a fashion

"informal and relaxed in accordance with the adopted rules." If a council member has a beef about procedure, it goes to the city attorney as parliamentarian, and then the majority of the council decides on questions or procedure.

Ex-Mayor Andre Pierre stretched the consent agenda like a rubber band to cover things like city contracts, privatizing city services, donating city equipment to Haiti, stuff like that. In other words, it got to the point of abuse. If it looked like an item would garner a 3-2 vote in favor, on it went to the consent agenda.

Another problem: With consent-agenda items, the public is not guaranteed a chance to speak until public comment time, which often happens around midnight, when most residents are resting up for work the next day.

Which brings us back to the July 9 fireworks. Of the 26 agenda items, 17 were assigned to the consent agenda. These items included a proposal for a charter high school; seven different annexation matters; two proposals for engineering contracts, one of \$198,000 for architectural and engineering services for the water treatment plant, the other for \$248,000 to upgrade water

and sewer; and a resolution appointing Mayor Tondreau to the Miami-Dade County Metropolitan Planning Organization's board, a position District 1 Councilman Scott Galvin had previously announced he coveted.

Councilwoman Carol Keys quietly lit the torch by moving to transfer those particular items to the regular agenda, rather than keeping them on the consent agenda. Galvin picked up the torch and threw gasoline on it.

"I stand on record by saying that the citizens of this city should be allowed to speak on any item they wish, and you should never shut down city speaking," Galvin said in a loud, clear, dramatic voice.

"You do not have the floor, Mr. Galvin," Tondreau responded. And while Galvin tried talking over her, she talked over him: "Do we need to open the forum? I have the floor and I am running the show. Can I finish? Can I finish, Mr. Galvin? I'm not going to do this all night. I will not fall into this little game. We are not putting on a show here. We are here to conduct the city's business."

The vibe got hostile, as Vice Mayor Marie Steril jumped in on Tondreau's

side. City attorney Regine Monestime and city clerk Michael Etienne started mixing it up as well, as hostile murmurings, snorts, and chortles spread through the audience. Tondreau wisely declared a ten-minute recess.

Caught in the middle of all this was Biscayne Landing, which was trying to get approval for a spine road so crews could get to work.

When the council got back from recess, it unanimously passed a motion to put all contracts in excess of \$100,000 on the regular agenda rather than the consent agenda. On paper, all was sweetness and light, but the hostility lingered in the room. Former mayor (and engineering contractor) Joe Celestin called the proceedings shameful. His biggest beef was with Galvin. Biscayne Landing had to wait.

Here's a suggestion from the peanut gallery: Chill out, add Robert's Rules of Order to the summer reading list, and, when in doubt, keep stuff on the regular agenda.

Otherwise, we're looking at a long two years.

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Technology for What Ails Us

Code for Miami is helping hack through Miami's impenetrable bureaucracy

By **Adam Schachner**
BT Contributor

My fiancée often observes that we live in a society where it's easier to order pizza via the Internet than it is to vote in elections. If this is our standard for online civic engagement, how can a concerned citizen stay involved?

Responding to a public demand for government accessibility, philanthropic organizations such as the Knight Foundation have opened their coffers to civic-engagement projects. In late June, the foundation's website announced, "Open Government projects receive more than \$3.2 million as winners of Knight News Challenge."

The grants fund app development addressing a wide range of municipal issues, from urban infill space usage to creating open databases of politicians' voting records. With this support, computer maestros are declaring, "We've been living in an information age for decades, and government should be ready to join us."

Code for Miami, a tech-savvy Miami community group, programs diverse online services for which municipal agencies haven't yet shown the knack. Meeting Monday nights at Wynwood's LAB (the Knight-sponsored Learn, Act, Build campus), this self-identified "brigade" conceptualizes an online Miami governance conducive to public participation. They refer to this as "civic hacking."



BT photo by Adam Schachner

As social as they are productive, Code for Miami's "hackers" overcome any stigma associated with the shadowy science-fiction jargon. Unlike classic action-movie villains who unravel civil security through glamorized feats of Internet sorcery, Code for Miami members are like any focused crowd working from laptops at a local hangout. They are dedicated, approachable, and cheerfully eager to make anyone a guinea pig for their developments.

"I can contribute by trying to break things," observes Dario Gonzalez, a visitor to the meeting who tested an early-stage app. The app in question, developed by Adrian Cardenas, texts the proximity of the nearest bus to a given stop, providing service in English, Spanish, and Kreyol.

Cardenas gives no instructions, encouraging Gonzalez to intuit how it works. The more self-explanatory the program, Cardenas reasons, the more

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likely it will assist all riders, from young commuters to *abuelas* catching the Calle Ocho number eight bus.

A founding Code for Miami member, Rebekah Monson, summarizes the benefit of letting Gonzalez try to crack the app: "We're hackers," she states. "We want to make sure this stuff works."

I sought out Code for Miami after I saw an alarm-red-colored City of Miami public meeting notice taped to the back gate of the Urbano Hotel, at the corner of S. Miami Avenue and SW 25th Street. While such documents typically convey details of the meeting, this one provided no information other than a date and time.

A visit to the City of Miami website offered little guidance on this meeting. The "events" tab provided a mishmash of calendars, written in a municipal Sanskrit, about upcoming committee meetings, but rarely anything regarding their agendas. Tired of scavenging the city's homepage, I searched on Google for local public meetings. Several links down, I found civic gold: a detail-rich schedule at the esoteric web address: <http://egov.ci.miami.fl.us/calendar/publicmeetings.aspx>. (Save it in your bookmarks.)

Frustration seems to be a common theme among would-be advocates for greater access to so-called *public* information. During one Code for Miami meeting, Karen Moore, a member of the 79th Street Community Redevelopment Association, approached the group for help reaching out to Miami residents who are subjected to major development projects with little representation. "On a daily basis," she explains, "I work with community groups who feel marginalized because they cannot get access to information. If you want to be an active citizen, it's easy to become frustrated because, no matter how diligent you are, the systems we have for advertising meetings or informing people of issues as they come up are not sufficient."

The reasons for this vary, but surely include the fact we suffer from brain drain, as techy youngsters depart for cities with more attractive employment opportunities, such as Seattle or New York. This, combined with low political participation among our residents, results in little pressure on local government to implement online platforms for engaging Miamians.

Code for Miami participants meet roundtable-style to formulate and advise

on methods for facilitating the layman's Internet experience. The cross-section of coders is considerate of inexperienced participants, visitors who sheepishly introduce themselves as categorically "not programmers." (I must have heard that ten times in the two meetings I attended.)

Ritualistically, the coders respond with: "You are here, so you are a programmer." The can-do attitude instills a sense of hope and urgency, as though the room brims with Miami's future.

Code for Miami participants offer subjective interpretations for engagement. On one screen, FL Legislature Tracker is a sleek interface, offering updates on all aspects of political decision-making. Down the line, IAmIOfUs provides instant demographic information in conjunction with the U.S. Census Bureau and online location services, based on a quick age/race/gender inquiry. The possibilities for using this information in compiling campaign or canvassing data per ZIP code are enticing to any civic advocate.

Ernie Hsuing, a cofounder of Code for Miami and recent transplant to the city, established a foothold in the local online community by developing MiamiWiki, a compendium of all things South Florida.

This project, like all Code for Miami efforts, thrives on open participation. Hsuing explains, "Everything is open source, so if anyone wants to add on to it, they can."

I tested the project's openness by submitting a snarky explanation of the 305/786 area code conflict. The posting was instant and, independent of my effort, a moderator soon added a charming image of a Florida map superimposed over a 786.

Those of us who wish to be involved in municipal matters without confronting an obstacle course can expect great accomplishments from Code for Miami. They are the wizards programming Miami's way to modern government.

To participate in these projects, visit: <http://miamiwiki.org>; <http://codeforamerica.org>; <http://facebook.com/code-for-miami>; www.meetup.com/Code-for-Miami; <http://code-for-miami.github.io/legislature-tracker>; <http://code-for-miami.github.io/iamlof.us>; Twitter @CodeForMiami.

Code for Miami meets Mondays from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at LAB Miami in Wynwood, 400 NW 26th St..

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Be Our Guest

The Fountainhead Residency is bringing artists from across the globe to Miami

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

A year ago this spring, Berlin-based artist Hannes Bend opened an exhibit at the Charest-Weinberg Gallery in the Wynwood Lofts that featured piles of car tires salvaged off the coast of Fort Lauderdale. Once upon a time, thousands of tires were dumped there in the hope they would create an artificial reef. It turned out to be an ecological disaster.

The intense smell from those long-submerged rubber tubes filled the gallery, emphasizing the point the artist was trying to make about manmade disasters. Foul odor or not, it was one of the most memorable shows in recent years.

Bend was also a participant in the Fountainhead Residency, a short-term home for a number of outstanding artists who've passed through town in the past few years, enriching Miami's visual arts life.

While the local art scene has been growing and maturing, work from beyond our borders, with its varied conceptual and national and international origins, can only help accelerate the process. Which is why the Fountainhead Residency program has become a true treasure.

Some of the artists, who hail from all over the globe, arrive in Miami for an exhibit and then are encouraged to

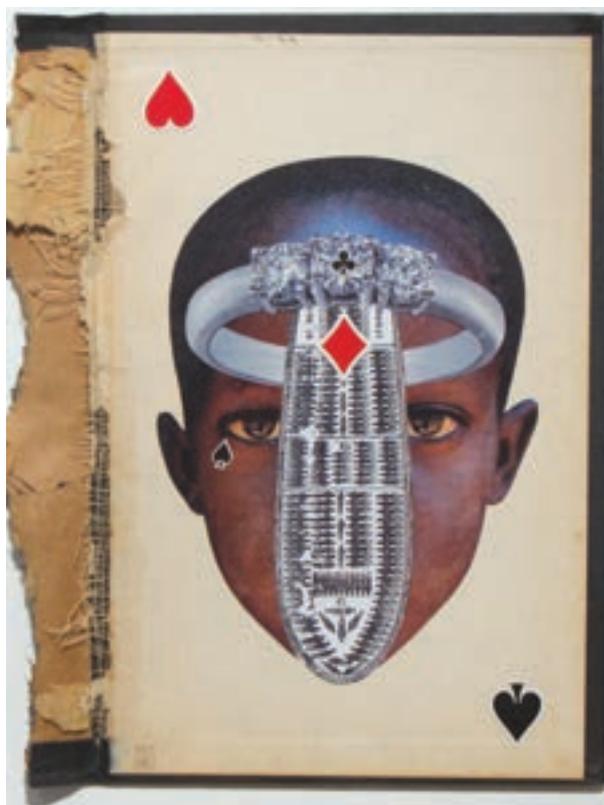
apply to the residency; others come for the program and then land shows. What their work tends to have in common, no matter the discipline or the artists' country of origin, is a high level of quality and intriguing subject matter.

Take, for example, another German alum of the Fountainhead, Lena Schmidt, whose somber wood sculptures comprised one of the best exhibits at the artist-run Primary Projects space in the Design District in 2011. Schmidt used a thin knife to carve up found wood planks, depicting lonely urban landscapes inhabited by power lines, traffic lights, and abandoned brick buildings. The Hamburg-based artist used both her hometown and Miami as visual backdrops (although these days Detroit might come to mind when contemplating these pieces).

Andre Leon Gray came down from North Carolina for his stint at the Fountainhead, and ended up with a solo show at the Carol Jazzar Gallery and was



Los Angeles-based Matt Sheridan showed at the ArtCenter/South Florida in June.



Precious Cargo Taken from the Bright Star, by Andre Leon Gray, from North Carolina.

featured at the Scope art fair during Art Basel Miami Beach 2012. His work, made from such items as books, brooms, tar, and sports trophies, is deeply rooted in social commentary and the black experience, with titles such as *Temporary Government Housing* and *There's Always Room, They Say, At The Top*.

These three artists are representative of the sophisticated perspectives and arresting work Fountainhead residents have brought to South Florida. But there have been many others.

Sitting in the living room of her home in Morningside, Kathryn Mikesell, who founded Fountainhead with her husband Dan in 2008, clearly loves the results of the venture thus far. The house is filled with art from Fountainhead residents, and is across the street from the MiMo-style home that hosts (usually) three residents at a time, for no more than two months.

Mikesell's two children, who are as ubiquitous at art openings as she is, are lounging about, while fish swim around

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Berlin's Hannes Bend brought salvaged tires to Charest Weinberg gallery in 2012.

in a mini-pond set into the floor. This is a laid-back operation.

It has to be. One of the questions Mikesell freely address when artists are applying deals with the “bathroom situation.” (Answer: There are two, with three separate bedrooms and work-spaces.) Which isn’t to say that it isn’t a pretty nice gig. The house is near the bay, and only blocks from bus stops on the Boulevard. Once an artist is accepted into residency, Fountainhead will pick up airfare, as well as foot the bill for the accommodations.

In addition, after the brief but intense residency, if artists want to stick around, they may find space in the Fountainhead Studios, which currently house more than 35 artists on two floors of a revamped warehouse at 7339 NW Miami Ct. in Little Haiti.

When it comes to who will receive a residency and studio space, Mikesell says a major focus is on how artists

complement each other and “bounce off” each other’s work, hence the close quarters. The point of both programs, she says, is to get artists to interact. If she feels an applicant might be unwilling to work with fellow artists, that will result in a rejection. But if that’s not an issue, any artist should feel free to apply.

On this early-summer evening, one of the artists working in the rear garage area is Jamaican-born Ebony G. Patterson, whose large, colorful collages and canvases reflect the bling, tensions, and expressive character that spring from the raw dancehall subculture of her native island. An exhibit of her work, along with that of Kenyan artist Peterson Kamwathi, opened in June (and runs through September 8) at Florida International University’s Frost Art Museum. It’s called “Six Degrees of Separate Nations.”

A couple of months earlier, during one of the Fountainhead’s periodic open-house nights, Los Angeles-based



Hamburg-based Lena Schmidt at Primary Projects: Somber scenes of urban decay.

Matt Sheridan was busy explaining that his video work was based on his abstract paintings, then morphed into its own art form. Behind him, his work screened on a living room wall.

Sheridan was amazed at how well the residency program had worked for him, and how well the artists were paired. He said it was immediately clear the Mikesells, and especially Kathryn, had spent a lot of time matching up the residents. Sheridan had also been busy visiting as many other studios and galleries in town as he could, as is encouraged by the program.

In the end, he and New York artist Ryan Roa, another former Fountainhead resident, were included in the ArtCenter/South Florida show, “Unpredictable Patterns of Behavior” (which closed July 28). Sheridan was given a darkened project room for his kinetic paintings, while Roa built one of his floor-to-ceiling sculptures from leather bungee cords in front of a gallery window,

making it visible from Lincoln Road. Two similar sculptures from Roa had appeared in the spring group show at Wynwood’s Emerson Dorsch Gallery (formerly Dorsch Gallery).

Not only does the flow of Fountainhead alums filling up local shows continue, it seems to be speeding up, as more and more international artists — from Sweden, Italy, South Africa, and points beyond — are expressing an interest in coming to Miami for the residency experience. Some of the artists are well established, with a long line of exhibitions; others are just starting out. The emphasis will remain on attracting an eclectic mix that will broaden the city’s artistic perspective.

As of now, the residency program is booked up through March 2014. The application process for future slots will open in September.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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www.briskygallery.com
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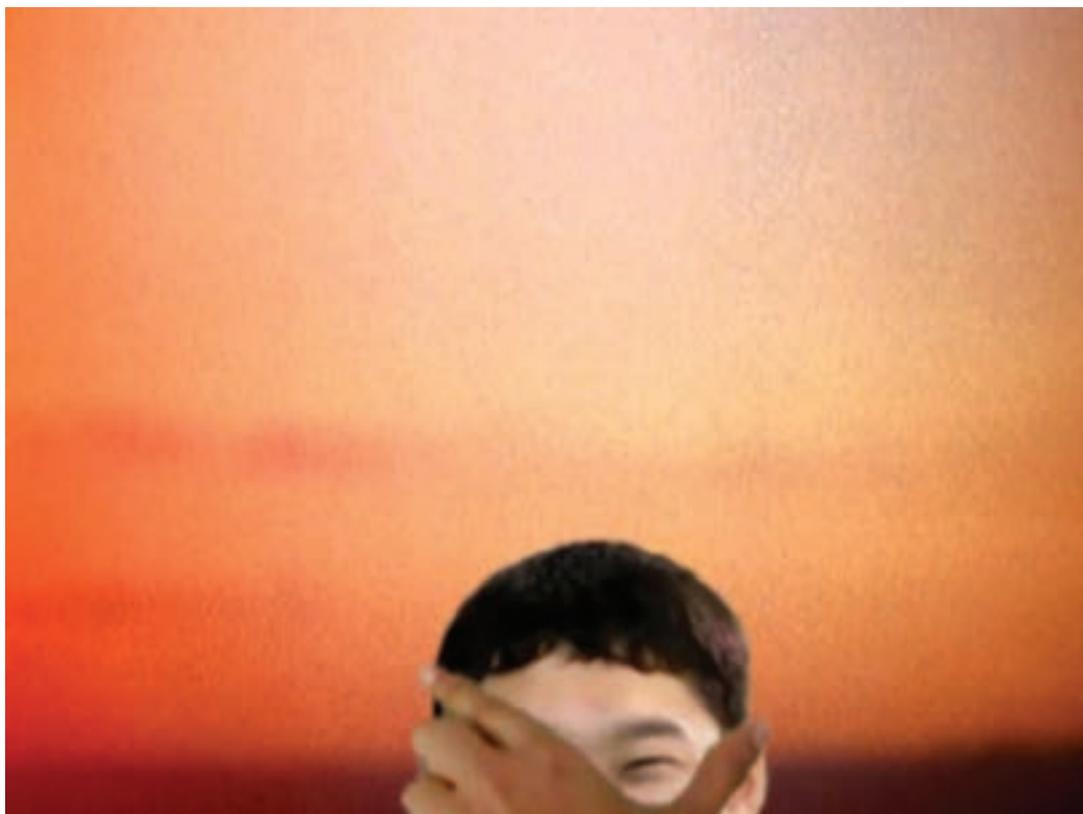
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Victoria Fu, *Swipe*, video, 2013, at Emerson Dorsch.

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Neha Vedpathak, *The Space Between*, mixed media, 2013, at N'Namdi Contemporary Miami.

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Maria Sultan, *Azucar Pa'Ti*, pastel, gouache, conte, and graphite on canvas, 2012, at Alberto Linero Gallery.

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Through September 3:
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Through September 8:
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Through December 31:
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You're a Cultural Institution, Charlie Brown!

Comic strips have influenced our pop culture since they first appeared in newspapers, but none more so than the iconic *Peanuts*. Now Snoopy, Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, and the rest of Charles Schulz's gang are the subject of a new exhibit at the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood (1650 Harrison St.). **Charles M. Schulz: Pop Culture in Peanuts** includes 70 cartoons across six decades. And there's an adjacent room where big and little *Peanuts* fans can attempt their own comic creations. It runs through the end of the month. Admission is \$10; \$6 for those under 18. Go to www.artandculturecenter.org.

Roam Free at Fairchild

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is one of those true gems that we are privileged to have in our midst, but we sometimes forget it's there. August is the perfect time to start remembering, as the **first Wednesday and every Sunday** of the month will be free. Explore it all, from the tropical rain forest, spice trees, and orchid islands to the weekend fruit market and the science village, which includes more than 3000 butterflies. The garden opens at 7:30 a.m. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is located at 10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables. Go to www.fairchildgarden.org.

Get Your Kicks at Sun Life

The World Cup is still a year away, but fans in South Florida won't have to wait that long to see great soccer. On **Tuesday, August 6, and Wednesday, August 7**, at 6:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., check out some of the true powerhouses of the sport, when the **International Champions Cup** winds up at Sun Life Stadium (2269 NW 199th St.). Upsets do happen, but there's a good chance that Real Madrid, Italy's AC Milan and Juventus, England's Chelsea, and even the Los Angeles Galaxy will be kicking it out over the two days. Tickets can be bought for individual matches or for the entire series. Prices range from \$55 to \$285. Go to www.internationalchampionscup.com.



A Big Night with Big New Sounds

It's hard to escape all things Brazilian these days, but then, who would want to? On **Friday, August 16**, the monthly Rhythm Foundation event **Big Night in Little Haiti** will break ground again by bringing us an entirely new sound from Recife, Brazil. Called *maracatu*, it's deeply rooted in African percussive traditions. In the courtyard of the Little Haiti Cultural Center (212 NE 59th Terr.), from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m., two *maracatu* groups will be paired with a Haitian marching band, for a night that will reverberate. Admission is free. Go to www.bignightlittlehaiti.com.

A Bonding Experience

Can't get enough of 007? If you missed *Skyfall* when it was released last fall — or even if you didn't — now's your chance to see it al fresco. The blockbuster, directed by Sam Mendes and starring Daniel Craig as Bond, James Bond, also features Javier Bardem as the villain and Judi Dench playing M for the last time. What's doubly cool is that you can see it for free on **Friday, August 16**, during the special summer **Movies on the Plaza** night at the spacious Brickell World Plaza (600 Brickell Ave.). The show starts at 8:00 p.m. Bring dinner, snacks, a cooler, but leave behind the glass bottles. Chairs are provided. Call 305-384-7170.

The Reel Brazil

No surprise that a highlight of the 17th annual **Brazilian Film Festival** is a tribute to the World Cup, as the country will host that pinnacle of sports events in 2014. As a warm-up, several films dedicated to soccer (er, futbol) will be screened during the festival's run from **Saturday, August 17, through Saturday, August 24**. Called Cinefoot, the series will be shown at the Miami Beach Cinematheque (1130 Washington Ave.) and the Colony Theatre (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach), which will also

screen the entries in the festival's Best Film category. Most tickets cost \$10. For schedule and times, go to www.brazilianfilmfestival.com/miami/2013.

Coral Gables Rocks!

Why is our neighboring, famed city of the eccentric codes called Coral Gables? Well, because many of the city's early homes were built of coral rock. Now you can discover some of these architectural treasures on a bike ride, courtesy of the Coral Gables Museum (285 Aragon Ave.), on **Sunday, August 18**. It's called a **Bike and Swim** tour. Bring your own bike (or rent one) and a swimsuit, as the afternoon ends at the Venetian Pool. The ride starts at 11:00 a.m. and costs \$10. RSVP to 305-603-8067.

Hitting a Nerve

In its 15th year, the **Optic Nerve** experimental video and film festival, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art (770 NE 125th St.), has once again broadened its boundaries. Originally a showcase only for local artists, several years ago the festival opened its application process to a national pool and, this year, international artists are also encouraged to apply. The jurors include curators from Argentina, England, and Norway. There will be two screenings, at 7:00 p.m. and



The Sound of Flamenco

Although flamenco is becoming increasingly popular everywhere, Miami is no city-come-lately to the Andalusian tradition. Case in point: The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1300 Biscayne Blvd.) is holding its eighth annual **Siempre Flamenco** festival on **Friday, August 30, and Saturday, August 31**. This year the emphasis will be on the singing associated with the genre, the soulful *cante flamenco*, which arose in southern Spain during the persecution of the Moors, Jews, and gypsies. Showtime is 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$38. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.

9:00 p.m., on **Friday, August 23**. For reservations, call 305-893-6211.

Up the River

On August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew whipped through Miami-Dade, leaving massive destruction and psychological scars. But hurricanes are part of life here, and Miami bounced back. You can check out just how much it has recovered with a boat tour from HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St.) on the storm's anniversary, **Saturday, August 24**, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The **Miami River Boat Tour**, led by historian Paul George, will explore Miami's revitalized riverside, its historic neighborhoods, and water traffic, from the days of the Tequesta Indians to today. The cost is \$44 for members, \$54 for nonmembers. Go to www.historymiami.org.

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

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Are the Village People Making a Comeback?

601 Biscayne Blvd.

Sometimes police officers have to file police reports on their own behalf. This officer was doing crowd control at the American Airlines Arena and left his hat with the front desk for safekeeping. After the event, he returned for his hat but was told it was missing. The officer went through all the proper channels to find his hat, but to no avail. Someone had pilfered it as a souvenir. At press time, the hat has yet to be returned. While we get that there are various uses for handcuffs, we really don't understand the stolen hat.

Today's Blue Plate Special: Crime

2800 Block of N. Miami Avenue

With this difficult economy, people are lucky to be employed. On the other hand, those who are employed invariably want more money. In this case, a cook decided to give himself a raise without bothering his boss. (We gather communication is not his strong suit.) Instead he waited until after hours, entered the restaurant, and with a crowbar jimmied open the door to his manager's office. Once inside the office, he stole more than a thousand dollars from the safe. We guess he did not think the cameras would identify him, but they clearly did. He was

subsequently arrested. At least he can be a prison cook.

Someone Left the Light On

500 Block of NE 76th Street

Victim was sleeping in the comfort of her bed when she saw a flashing light. Unsure if it was an alien landing or perhaps a scene from *Paranormal Activity*, she arose. It turned out to be a Boulevard thug in his natural setting: someone else's house. The woman shrieked when she saw the intruder and ran out the back door to a neighbor's home, where she called the police. The intruder left long before police arrived. This is Miami, people. Eight hours of sleep at night is not advisable. Learn to take naps throughout the day.

Time to Bail from Miami

100 Block of NE 75th Street

Some people are just born victims. There's little that can be done about it.



This so-called victim received a phone call from a person she had never met who told her that a mutual friend needed to post bail. Being the kindhearted person she is, she immediately met him downstairs and gave him the \$300 he had requested. He called soon after, asking for another \$400. She gave it to

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him. Finally growing suspicious, the victim called the mutual friend, who informed her he hadn't been in jail and didn't know the person who asked her for the money. Trusting humanity is increasingly becoming a danger in this city.

Good Idea to Always Carry Some Cash

14600 Block of NE 18th Avenue

Victim needed to jumpstart his car in his apartment parking lot, so a kindly stranger assisted him. When they were done, the stranger asked him for \$10, to which the victim replied that he did not have any cash on him. The kind stranger slammed the victim's trunk in anger, screamed something in Kreyol, and walked away. The next day, the victim found his car heavily vandalized. It had been keyed in various places, the radio was cracked, the dashboard was smashed, and the glove box was missing. The perpetrator left a screwdriver, which the police impounded for possible DNA. Unsure if this is linked to the jumpstart, but it appears that kindness is relative to the green in your pocket in North Miami.

Exercise Leaves Victim Thousands of Pounds Lighter

1800 Block of NE 123rd Street

How often do you go to the gym and place your clunky car keys on the floor beside you as you work out? After all, nobody wants all that pointy metal protruding from their skimpy shorts. Well, this person placed his keys on the ground and, after his set, walked away. When he finally remembered, he ran back to the exercise machine he had been using, but sadly, the keys were gone. When he went to look for his car, it was gone, too. Perhaps it was a thoughtful workout buddy who figured the man would be too tired at the end of his reps to drive his own car home. No? Oh, well, North Miami, I tried.

You Want Fries With That?

700 Block of NE 79th Street

Suspect walked into this restaurant and ordered her meal. As soon as the clerk turned around to ready her order, the woman grabbed the tip jar and placed it under her shirt. She then went to her car and emptied the contents of the jar, before returning the tip jar to the

restaurant counter. She must have figured the combination of hiding the tip jar in her shirt and then returning it would not raise suspicion. Crime Beat doesn't know if she waited around for her order. No arrests have been made.

Fast Food Not Fast Enough

Biscayne Boulevard and NE 82nd Street

Check any community's police reports and you'll find bicycle theft, lots of it. Giving your bike away is another thing. This victim went into a McDonald's, leaving his unattended and unlocked bike outside. Within minutes (surprised it wasn't seconds), his mode of transportation was gone. When asked who might have stolen the bike, victim answered, "I have no clue." Well said, sir. All we can offer is for cyclists to stay on their bikes and avoid pit stops, let alone greasy cheeseburgers that will only slow you down if and when you have to give chase to a crook making off with your wheels.

Another Satisfied Customer

1900 Block of NE 2nd Avenue

Just because someone is a frequent customer does not mean he can be trusted.

This is Miami and such frequency may be little more than "casing the joint." At this business, a loyal customer one day walked into the back office and removed a laptop. He must have been eyeing it for a while. In true Miami logic, the thief probably figured he had earned it, what with all the money he'd contributed to the establishment. He even had a laptop bag ready for the occasion. Unfortunately, no arrests have been made. The customer has not returned.

Love Means Never Having to Say You Did It

100 Block of NE 78th Street

Victim returned from a three-day stay in the hospital to discover her cell phone was missing. So was \$46 in cash. She immediately suspected her boyfriend (she knows her man) and called police. With police at her home, she dialed up her boyfriend and put him on speakerphone. He admitted to the theft and said he was coming right over. He never did, as he evidently knows his woman even better than she knows him. And you think your relationship has trust issues?

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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A Grave Concern

The Lemon City Cemetery Memorial marks the final resting place of some of Miami's early black settlers — so why is it private property?

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Not only do we pave over paradise in Miami, we also pave over the dead. In the case of the Lemon City Cemetery, a small group of determined citizens put the brakes on the bulldozers and prevented this historically black cemetery from becoming a parking lot, six feet under cement.

A memorial was erected in 2011, but seeing it is challenging, as the memorial hides behind a high-rise and remains private property. The land, owned by the YMCA of Greater Miami, was under development in April 2009 by the Carlisle Development Group and the Biscayne Housing Group, when archeological digs required by the City of Miami revealed human bones.

Local historian Enid Pinkney formed the Lemon City Cemetery Community Corporation to fight for its preservation and, by November 2009, the land had been designated a historical site by the City of Miami. It was not an easy battle to win, she said. And considering the site remains private property, its future might well depend on the whims of the marketplace.

According to Pinkney, the City of Miami had given permission to build on the cemetery because they had no record of its existence. The Lemon City Cemetery Community Corporation opposed plans by the developers to move the bones to another location.

Eventually, says Pinkney, the developers agreed to pay for the construction of a memorial and to leave the surrounding portion of the property undeveloped, as a garden. Located on 71st Street, just east of I-95, the property contains Village Carver Apartments, two ten-story buildings of low-income housing. In 2009, the total YMCA property of seven acres was assessed by Miami-Dade County to be worth \$2.4 million.

The memorial garden is about two acres, similar to the original cemetery's estimated size, and provides rare green space in this ultra-urbanized area. The garden's simple design is mostly open grass, but knowing its history gives a visitor a sense of being in a special place.

A raised ridge, a couple of feet tall and wide and covered by grass, encircles most of the property, as if the dead have crawled into aboveground graves. Pine tree saplings and larger shade trees punctuate the raised ridge.



The Lemon City Cemetery Memorial stands on private property, within a green space of about two acres.



A manmade ridge covered with grass and trees encircles the site.

The actual location of the graves is unknown, as the property has been disturbed more than once. When bones were discovered accidentally during the digging phase of construction, they were reinterred within the garden. A small plaque placed in the grass in November 2012 memorializes these events.

The showpiece here is a 12-foot-tall, bright yellow memorial standing in the center of a raised concrete circle surrounded by light-blue bricks. These colors reflect the national colors of the Bahamas, the place of origin of many of the cemetery's dead.

The memorial is three-sided, a triangular pole of yellow metal, into which are etched the names of 523 people believed to have been buried here. Some are identified only by the family name. Two additional names, discovered after the memorial was erected, are listed on the plaque in the grass, bringing Lemon City Cemetery's total to 525 souls.

Local historian Larry Wiggins found the names through archives maintained by the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the Mormons. The exhaustive listing of names calls to mind much larger memorials, such as the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

One of the names on the memorial shocked the 81-year-old Pinkney, a resident of Brownsville and an at-large officer of the Dade Heritage Trust. A John Clark had been buried here in 1924. Pinkney's grandfather, whom she never met, had also been named John Clark. Could they have been the same man? Pinkney discovered the John Clark buried in the cemetery had left behind a widow named Melvinia. That was the name of Pinkney's grandmother.

"I flipped!" says Pinkney. "I can't even describe the feeling I had. It was like it was predestined." Until the site's excavation, she had no idea that one of her direct ancestors had been buried in the Lemon City Cemetery.

She is pleased that the memorial commemorates some of the people who helped build Miami. "Those were the people who cleared the land. Their contribution has not been heralded," she says. Pinkney's mother and grandparents came from Exuma in the Bahamas, and

LEMON CITY CEMETERY MEMORIAL

Park Rating

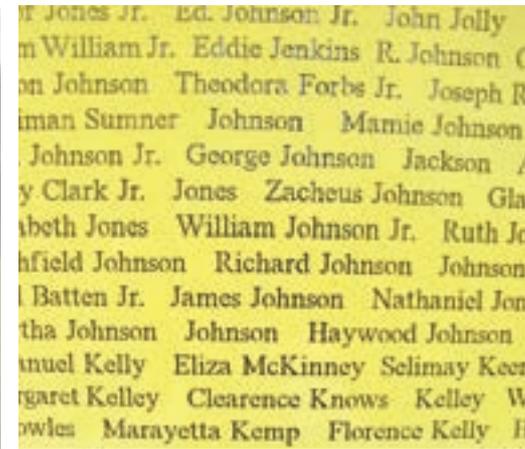
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Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



The memorial includes the names of more than 500 people, but without any explanation.



A small plaque in the grass commemorates the discovery of human bones during construction.



Most of the dead hailed from the Bahamas and were buried here between 1911 and 1935.

she has built a home there on the property once owned by her great-grandparents.

Burials in the Lemon City Cemetery are documented from 1911 until 1935, and they include many infants and at least one World War I veteran. During the Jim Crow era, a “color wall” was erected along NW 12th Avenue to separate the graves of blacks from those of whites. By the 1950s, the city had no record of a cemetery ever having existed on the site and the property was developed.

Today this location near I-95 is noisy, and the views are dismal. To the west stands a power relay station. To the north are train tracks. Surrounding areas appear highly industrial. It is not a place to rest in peace.

Many people live and play here, but quiet parks and shady green spaces are nearly nonexistent. While the memorial for the Lemon City Cemetery cannot fix that situation, it offers educational opportunities for both local history and

neighborhood enhancement.

It remains unclear if the memorial is open to the public, although the property is easy to access, and a one-sided fence leaves the side by the parking lot unobstructed.

It is also unclear if residents of the Village Carver Apartments are aware of the history in their backyard. Without a prominent historic marker or other interpretive sign, the yellow memorial might just seem like a long list of anonymous

names to passersby.

For now, these names have been restored to living memory. It remains to be seen how long the memorial endures, or if, like the cemetery it honors, its existence will be brief, and then forgotten.

“They bought a cemetery,” Pinkney says of the developers. “It shouldn’t have happened.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Another Day, Another Dog Dies

What the county commission's refusal to fund the Pets' Trust means for unwanted animals in Miami-Dade

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

News item: *Last month Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez and the county commission slashed \$19 million from the proposed budget of the voter-approved Pets' Trust, snuffing out hopes of a no-kill shelter and condemning thousands of animals to death.*

My name is Lucky. Actually, that's not my real name. I lost that, along with my dignity and privacy, when I arrived at Miami-Dade County Animal Services days ago. I also lost my heritage. My dad was a black, flat-coated retriever and my mom was a Newfoundland. Here, I am "Lab mix #A764293."

I'm not sure why I'm here. I'm really confused. Previously, I lived with a family. Recently, chaos erupted in the house because my human mom had a baby. This seemed to make her very happy. Naturally, this made me happy as well. All I care about is my owners' happiness and well-being.

However, things quickly went south for me. I received fewer pettings and ear scratches. Instead of feeding me herself, my human mom delegated the job to another young human. Sometimes he forgot to feed me, and she never noticed. Also, at times, my water bowl stood virtually empty.

I didn't want to complain. It's not in my nature. I tried to join in the family festivities. Sill, life became more and more lonely. It seemed as if, as I've



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

heard humans say, they "just weren't that into me" anymore.

Then, a few days ago, my human mom held out my leash. Excited, I ran to the front door. We were going on a walk, like we used to do a few times every day. I loved those walks. So many fascinating smells. I enjoyed burying my nose in the flowers. (A bee got me once, but it was worth it!) Also, I snagged

yummy tidbits like pizza crust remnants and the occasional Popsicle wrapper. I had a secret crush on Lucinda, the fluffy border collie three houses down, and I could always sniff her trail. Plus, I met other dogs.

But my human owner did not take me for a walk. Instead, we went on a long drive on the highway. I stared gloomily out the side window, nervous that we

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were going to see the vet.

As we arrived at our destination, I impatiently pawed at the car window, signaling my desire to get on with exploring somewhere new. We went inside. I didn't like the smell there. I couldn't put my paw on it, but it seemed off. My owner signed some paperwork.

Then a weird thing happened. My human mom handed my leash to another human I didn't know. I went willingly, but was distressed to see my human mom looking sad. I wanted to go to her, lick her face to make her feel better, but when I tried to move, the new human pulled my leash. She bent down, smiled a little, and patted my head. "Hi, Lucky," she said. Lucky? Who is Lucky? I looked for my human mom for answers. She was gone.

This place is noisy, crowded, and bare. I don't know why I'm here, but I hope it's only temporary. Maybe it is one of those "doggy daycares" I've heard about. I wish my human mom would hurry up and come get me. I want to go home.

All the dogs gossip in here. I hear humans do that too, in prison. I know

I'm not in prison, because I'm not a "bad dog." But I've seen what prisons look like on TV and, I must admit, this place does resemble one.

Anyway, the dogs talk late into the night about a human named Carlos Gimenez. I know he is the mayor of my county, and he is not popular among the canines. And although I haven't been over to their area, I'm told the cats hate him, too.

"We had a chance," Bones, a purebred shar-pei told me, his brow creasing even more than it does naturally. "The people voted to help us. A lot of them. Half a million of them, in fact. But Gimenez renegeed on his promise to give the humans \$19 million earmarked for the shelter."

"But why do we need their money?" I asked, while looking down the concrete-lined hall for any available human. I really had to do my business and, for some reason, the humans here kept us behind bars, without doggy doors. (Come to think of it, that's the same way humans keep their criminals.) And what is a shelter?

"What, you don't know?" yipped Sweetie, a Chihuahua-dachshund mix.

Puzzled, I looked at Sweetie: "Know what?"

Sweetie looked down, and with tail lowered, trotted to the other end of the room she shared with Junior, the German shepherd. Junior hadn't lifted his head off his crossed paws since I'd arrived. He looked at me, ears twitching. Must be shy, I thought.

Max the basset hound fixed saucer-like, soulful eyes on me and sighed. "We were promised that money so the humans could make this a no-kill, high-sterilization facility, and we'd have a chance of going to a new human family," he said. "But Gimenez and most of the commissioners ignored the people's vote and doomed us."

"But I like my human family just fine," I said indignantly. "And what do you mean by no-kill?"

Just then, a human I had never seen before came down the hallway, stopped in front of Sweetie and Junior's room, and checked their paperwork. Sweetie glanced anxiously over at Junior, who continued to stare straight ahead. The human opened the door.

"Well, finally!" I barked. "I guess we are all getting our walk now."

Max looked mournfully at me and slowly shook his head, causing his mighty jowls to jiggle. Sweetie whimpered.

"Come on, Junior," the young female human said. She smiled weakly at him. What was it with the sad smiles in this place, anyway?

Sweetie started barking and yipping. She growled at the human before cowering in the corner. Junior got up and allowed her to put a leash around his neck. He walked out slowly, with his tail tucked, averting his brown eyes. From her corner, Sweetie barked at me: "This is a high-kill shelter."

So it wasn't a walk. It was a death march. But why? What were we all doing here? What had we done wrong?

The human turned toward my room and eyeballed my paper work. I cringed. But she turned on her heels and walked with Junior, who now, apparently determined to go down with dignity, lifted his head.

From a distance, I heard the echo of a door slam shut. Junior never returned.

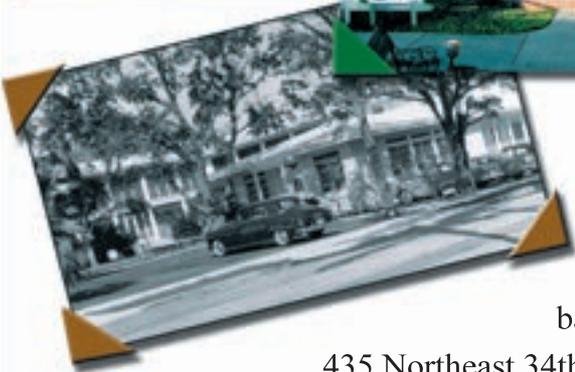
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A Mighty Icon Filled with Memories

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the *BT*

Miami's iconic Orange Bowl is seen in this aerial photograph on the occasion of the 1948 New Year's Day Orange Bowl Classic.

One of South Florida's most recognizable structures, the facility, known initially as Roddey Burdine Stadium, was built by the New Deal's Public Works Administration in 1937. The 24,000 seat steel and concrete stadium was created at a cost of \$340,000, on

the site of a city park.

This photograph shows the stadium with its new upper-deck additions packed with spectators watching the underdog Kansas Jayhawks battle evenly with the Ramblin' Wreck of Georgia Tech until the game's final moments, when the latter pulled ahead to win 20-14.

That Orange Bowl Classic was broadcast nationally on radio. By the early 1950s, it was telecast. But the stadium was more than the venue for New Year's Day Classics.



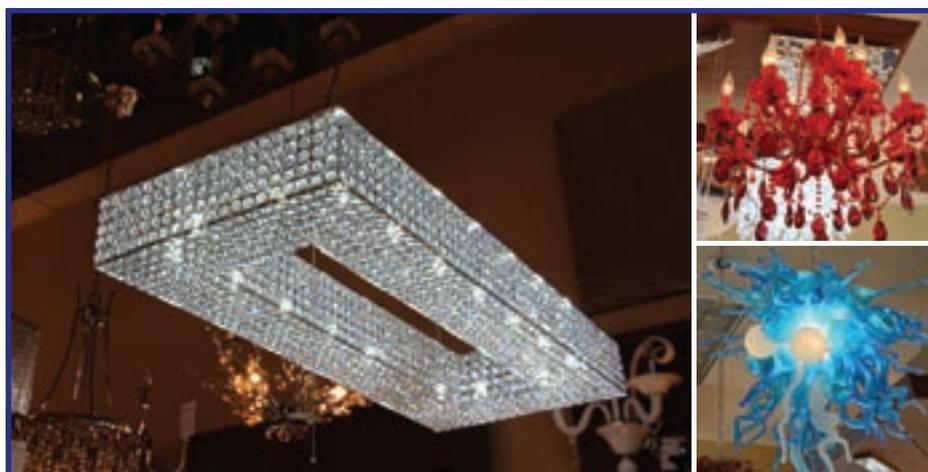
Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, #1989-011-12192

It also hosted the University of Miami Hurricanes, the Miami Dolphins, and five Super Bowls. The facility served as a venue for musical concerts, boxing matches, the University of Miami's National Championship polo teams, a cowboy exhibition by the famed Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd), and one baseball game, starring the legendary Satchel Paige.

Sadly, the great stadium came down five years ago. The new Marlins ballpark stands on that historic site today.

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The Unkindest Cut

Indiscriminate branch removal can lead to tree failure later on

By **Jeff Shimonski**
BT Contributor

About a year ago I was asked to visit a home to look at a tree and give an opinion. I was told beforehand the insurance company wanted the owner to cut off a large section of the tree because it was too close to the house. Well, I thought, that could make lots of sense, but let's see the tree first.

When I arrived at the home, the owner and I walked into the backyard. He pointed out a very healthy-looking and large live oak tree growing about eight feet or so away from the house. Now, it was pretty obvious that this tree had been there for a long time. The trunk was so wide that I would have been unable to wrap my arms around it. The house had been built in the 1950s. There had been some additions, but the house and tree had certainly gotten along quite well for many years, at least until the insurance company got involved.

What the insurance company wanted was for the owner to cut off a large branch that was connected to the trunk at about the same height as the house's roof. The branch was growing over the house and, if the owner cut the branch off, the insurance company would reward him by not canceling his homeowners insurance. I was dumbfounded.

Surely the insurance folks had made a mistake. The owner assured me that they had been very clear about the amputation of a very healthy and quite large

chunk of his tree. I then mentioned that cutting off that much of the tree's canopy would be illegal in the municipality where the house was located and that the owner could be fined.

(The ordinance, common throughout communities in our area, states that removing more than 25 percent of a tree's canopy is illegal and the owner liable to fines and possible mitigation requirements. This is in line with accepted tree-industry standards, which designate the same 25-percent limit on tree canopy removal.)

So why would the insurance company place the homeowner in such a difficult position? It is well documented that when a large branch is cut off a mature tree, in this case a branch approximately 18 inches in diameter, an infection court is created. Remember, a tree's vascular system is under tension so fluids can move through the tree. When that vascular system is cut into, there is nothing to keep fungal spores, bacteria, and insects from entering the exposed, unprotected cut.

Yes, "wound wood" will eventually cover the damage, but the harm will already have been done. It doesn't take long for fungi to start establishing a healthy, growing colony that will easily follow the tree's own vascular system (like a highway) and, if the fungus is a virulent species, the tree will start decaying from within.

So what might happen in a few years? The decaying section of the tree might not be able to support the weight above it (the rest of the tree's canopy) and the tree will



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

A beautiful but parasitic fungus growing out of a damaged live oak. The fungus will prevail.

come crashing down. There may be no visible sign of dying foliage or branches in the canopy to alert the owner or arborist of a pending failure of the tree.

Another important factor to consider when removing large portions of a tree's canopy is the different way the tree will respond to high winds. This is one of the reasons it is not an accepted industry practice to "lion's tail" trees, where smaller branches are removed and the foliage on larger branches cut back so the interior of the tree can be seen. Removing large portions of foliage and branches will reduce the damping effects these limbs once had on tree movement in the wind, thereby increasing the chances of tree failure.

In an attempt to address insurance company mandates to chop off branches from trees, the Florida chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (FISA) has created a form letter that can be sent to insurance companies. In part the letter reads, "It has been brought to the attention of FISA that your agency is

requesting tree work that is not in keeping with ANSI A300 Pruning Standards. Our concerns are that indiscriminate removal of all limbs growing over structures will have many negative impacts on the overall health and longevity of the tree, and can lead to future tree failure."

The letter goes on to state: "To reduce your concerns as well as ours, we recommend that you have your client contact an ISA Certified Arborist to perform a tree risk-assessment report. This report will determine the current condition of the tree."

I see lots of potential problems with mandated, indiscriminate branch removal, and lots of future work for attorneys.

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

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Falling Into the School Year

If you're like our family, you don't mind an early end to summer

By Crystal Brewe
BT Contributor

The second week of June, I received a back-to-school catalogue from a certain well-known retailer. It's official: Industry has applied the Christmas-in-October and Halloween-in-August marketing principles to an already heightened parental ache to return to the normalcy of the school year.

It's the perfect storm of commercialism: exhaustion, panic, guilt, and a large dose of "but it's for the kids." Besides Disney, this is the best moneymaking combination of all.

During the first week of summer, we dove headfirst into the sunscreen-smudged long days and hot summer nights with a vengeance. We ate barbecue and watermelon and hit the beach. But we have jobs. It's hard, as parents with demanding careers, to celebrate summer *all* summer. We love summer, but we really love the stability and regime the school year offers.

I really wish I could be one of the moms who suffers melancholy at the idea of back to school. A friend recently said to me: "I will really miss the leisurely breakfasts and board games at two in the afternoon." I would miss that, too. But that's not our summer.

Outside of a weeklong vacation, our summer typically consists of a trapeze-like

act starring my husband and me. There is Harry Potter camp, adventure camp, cheerleading camp, Pinkalicious camp, spy camp, science camp. Frantic 5:00 p.m. calls between us are standard: "Which child are you going to pick up, and what should we do for dinner?"

This year, Everly, our four-year-old, will join Matilda, our eight-year-old, at her school. This will be a monumental shift for us, not just financially (since we are moving from a private and pricey daycare to a public school), but convenience-wise. Just one drop-off! Just one pickup! We've been looking forward to this day for years. Everly, in particular, is ecstatic. Finally, the day has arrived when she gets to enter the majestic gates of her big sister's school as a *student*.

Everly has been excited about school starting since the last day of spring. She woke up at the crack of dawn the day after school let out and asked, "Do I start my new school today?"

I remember going back to school when I was a kid. I even remember the way it smelled. Fresh paper, new shoes, a new lunch box, and a clean slate with a new teacher. I wasn't a bad kid, but I was very social, so at the end of the year, the teacher and I always parted ways amicably. I suspect Everly may follow in my footsteps.

A good back-to-school transition involves advance planning. I learned



my lesson a couple of years back, when I hysterically ran through the mall two days before school started only to find that just about every store had been pillaged and there were no uniforms or supplies to speak of. Poor Matilda was lucky she had uniforms from the year before that still fit her (and that Amazon Prime has great overnight shipping rates).

Today the school principal threw us a curve ball: A notice about a new "formal Mondays" policy (on top of the regular blue uniform policy) that requires button-down white shirts, plaid skirts for girls, and ties for boys. This is a public school with a large number of at-risk students. "Formal Mondays"? Really?

In the Brewe house, we conduct a full fashion show, clothes fitting, and closet purge a few weeks before school starts. This allows us to see what fits who, what can be handed down, and what is needed when we make our back-to-school shopping pilgrimage.

Forget the mall. My favorite place for school shopping in Miami is Kids Are... Worth It, at 79th Street and Biscayne Boulevard, in the Biscayne Plaza shopping center. Don't let the exterior fool

you. They have a ton of options, and I have never seen such durable materials.

I have one rule when it comes to school uniforms: The more synthetic the material, the better. Believe me, I have gone the 100-percent organic cotton route. It tears, it stains, it fades, and it pills. We love the earth, but if I could buy a school uniform made of Teflon, I would. I want something that will stand up on its own when placed on the floor.

Once the shopping is out of the way, I can't help but worry about mental preparation for the early mornings. We aren't native Miamians, but we have really managed to embrace the "ish" philosophy (as in, we'll be there around eight-ish).

My husband collects the "tardies" we receive for dropping off Matilda at 8:07 like baseball cards. He said he is working on a performance art piece involving the tardy notices and interpretive dance.

Daylight savings kicks our butt, and back to school with the 8:00 a.m. start time is going to be the death of us. But the Brewes love a challenge.

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Meeting the Challenge

A new climate-change awareness group convenes at the Biltmore to plot a course of action

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Miami is waking up to the challenge of climate change. "I'm taking action because I know that the unified strength of public action always brings about positive change," wrote Libby Galati from Coral Gables, after completing a weekend course in nonviolent action (along with me and about 20 other individuals from across South Florida).

"The threat of climate change makes me feel desperate. Doing something to address this crisis makes me more optimistic about our future," wrote Neil Schneider of Miami, another participant.

What brought this motley crew together was the international environmental organization 350.org, based in New York. The organization had recently trained a group called 350 North Florida, and they sent trainer Justin Haaheim from Connecticut to rally the troops in Miami.

It marks a turning point, because the people huddled in that room at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables (not a bad draw for environmentalists) were of many ages and backgrounds, but they shared one mind about climate change. The time for action is now. The place is here.

A 350.org representative said that our group's members, who applied for the training, did not represent the usual suspects. There were entrepreneurs, engineers, homemakers, teachers, college students, a veterinarian, and a union

organizer. They listened to each other.

"Miamians are a diverse group and have family members in other, less fortunate regions of the world that will be more greatly impacted by climate change than we," wrote Jahmour Givans of Miami Gardens, a sophomore at Brown University. "By creating a culture of awareness in Miami, we hopefully will be able to influence citizens to push for climate action both here and in their places of origin."

The 350.org training was surprising in that it did not ask for any money, and it did not preach any ideology about climate change. However, it did ask participants to touch each other on a blanket. The challenge was like a group game of Twister, and we failed more than once. After nearly an hour of effort, the group finally succeeded in moving the blanket according to the game's instructions, and the room erupted in cheers.

The winner of the weekend's rock-paper-scissors throw-down was Kamal Daghistani, a student at the University of Miami with origins in Syria. He poses this question: "What can you change in your daily life to become more energy efficient?"

One of the few familiar faces at the meeting was my partner in eco-concern, Gabriole Van Bryce, who serves with me on the board of the Environmental Coalition of Miami and the Beaches. She wrote, "Climate change, especially sea-level rise, is an urgent issue for South Florida. We need to update our entire community on the scientific projections



BT photo/illustration by Marcy Mock

and the actions we need to take now as a unified community."

Could Miami become unified around this issue? The June issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine featured a provocative article on climate change with the simple title, "Goodbye, Miami." It predicts that a hurricane will be the final of many blows that renders the city unlivable by 2030.

The essential problem is captured in the name 350.org, which refers to the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide deemed safe by scientists. Last month, the earth surpassed the threshold of 400 parts per million of carbon dioxide, and the number continues upward, resulting in predictions of a hotter and more violent climate.

For low-lying areas like South Florida, the predicted sea-level rise this century means an inevitable end by drowning.

Over the past year, 350.org has focused its efforts on opposing the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada to Texas, a project supported by both of Florida's U.S. senators, Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson. (President Obama referred to the controversy in a speech in June at Georgetown University.)

Here in Miami, considered the world's most vulnerable city to sea-level rise, connections are strong with

vulnerable countries like Haiti and Cuba. Don't we have a responsibility to these southern neighbors, who have contributed relatively little to the fossil-fuel emissions driving climate change?

Danielle Goodman of Miami thinks we do. She wrote, "I care about protecting nature and want to participate in sane human responses to deprivation. Climate change is also a problem of ethics and fairness, since the poor are disproportionately affected. Here in Miami, many of us have come from deprived places and are grateful for the material plenty in which we now live. I think it's important that we care for this plentiful, materially supportive environment and yet remember that [the places we came from are] affected by our actions here. Our individual or family's progress can include protection of the earth. Bottom line: Let's make thinking globally and acting locally 'so Miami.'"

Miami, whether it knows it or not, is becoming the poster child for climate change. At least one group thinks they can give a voice to that child.

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By **Bill Citara**
BT Contributor

There are many things more difficult than finding a good inexpensive Pinot Noir.

Passing a camel — or Kevin Smith — through the eye of a needle. Walking on water. Walking anywhere in Miami. Electing an honest Florida politician. Electing any honest politician. Liking Jeffrey Loria.

Even so, that doesn't mean finding a good, inexpensive Pinot is easy. Pinot Noir, to put it bluntly, is a pain in the ass. The grapes are thin-skinned, like a wispy, anorexic Hollywood actress, which makes them susceptible to rot and mildew and assorted fungi, not to mention shriveling and drying. It's genetically promiscuous and unreliable. Some estimates place the number of Pinot Noir clones worldwide at 1000; Cabernet Sauvignon has about a dozen.

It attracts pests like cameras do Kardashians, and ferments unpredictably. Then, all of a sudden, it can lose its charming aromas and flavors after it's bottled. All of which means: a) there's a lot of bad Pinot Noir out there, and b) there's a lot of expensive Pinot Noir out there.

Vino does not like bad Pinot Noir. Vino cannot afford expensive Pinot Noir. Vino loves — *adores* is not too strong a word — good, inexpensive Pinot Noir. And Vino's adoration is your good luck, because years of meticulous research

and obsessive tasting (okay, it was really just an afternoon of running around to several wine stores), have unearthed a batch of surprisingly pleasant and affordable Pinot Noirs that display at least a modicum of the grape's complex, earthy, subtle varietal character.

For example, what was easily the best wine of the tasting, the **2011 Estancia Monterey County Pinot Noir**. Yes, many California Pinots apparently want to be soft, fleshy Merlots or big, brassy Cabernets when they grow up. But this cool-climate Pinot is happy to be what it is, a wine of some subtlety and complexity that delivers aromas and flavors of red cherries and plums and strawberries, revealing nuances of black olives and toast and tobacco with every sip. Oh, and just a trace of that Burgundian funk we Pinot Noir-ophiles love.

Easily the best value of the tasting was also from California, the **2012 Cloud Break**. Priced at a blessed \$8.99, it was maybe a little fruitier, a little less complex than the Estancia, but nothing you'd want to kick out of bed at night. It also did that cherry-strawberry number, the olive-toast-tobacco thing, that palate-dance of Pinot Noir funkiness. I'd buy a case of this puppy in a heartbeat.

Not quite on that level was another California wine, the **2011 Smoking Loon**. Like the Cloud Break and Estancia, it nicely balanced cherry-berry fruit, fleshed it out with a touch of toast and olives and earth, and finished leaving

the taste of tangy strawberries on the palate. Also like the other two, it's an excellent food wine — medium-bodied, under 14-percent alcohol, fruit-forward but with enough acid and tannins to keep it honest.

Of course, talking about Pinot Noir without talking about France is like smoking a joint without inhaling. Now, for ten bucks a bottle you're not going to be getting fruit from Burgundy, where Pinot Noir is God, Buddha, and Elvis all rolled into one. But with the **2010 Ropiteau Pinot Noir** you do get the expertise of the Burgundy-based vintner, with fruit labeled Pays D'Oc, meaning sourced from in and around the vastly more affordable Languedoc-Roussillon region. What you get here is fruit that's a little brighter, acidity that's a little sterner, background notes of minerals, spice, and toast that are little more prominent. You also get a wine that's a very good value and, when lightly chilled, is perfect backyard barbecue sipping.

It's indicative of the internationalization of wine that even the Italians are making a straight-ahead Pinot Noir. And with the **2011 Le Colline**, they're doing a pretty decent job of it. The wine starts off with a fruit-toasty-earthly nose, then moves on to plummy, berryish flavors with hints of spice and oak, and ends



At the North Miami Beach Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) you'll find the Finca Roja, Le Colline, and Ropiteau Pinot Noirs, all for \$9.99, along with the Cloud Break for \$8.99. The excellent Estancia is at the North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) for \$10.99, while the Smoking Loon Pinot Noir is at Lorenzo's Italian Center in North Miami Beach (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381), also for \$10.99.

with a long, tangy-fruity finish.

The Argentines, at least those at Finca Roja, are doing even better, judging by my second-favorite wine of the tasting, the **2011 Finca Roja Pinot Noir**. Enticing aromas of strawberries, olives, and spices segue into flavors of cherries and berries and olives and cloves and fennel, all wrapped in a well-structured package that's a steal at \$10.

At that rate, you might even be able to pass a camel — or Kevin Smith — through the eye of a needle.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Bee, Box, Brasileiro, Bagels, and More

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Twinkies are back! That was major food news last month, according to media response, including a national poll in which 34% of respondents (2% specifically citing deep-fried Twinkies) cried, “Hooray!”

Admittedly, 54% said, “Who cares?”

Locally, food news was more interesting. Chef Bee (Piyarat Potha Arreeratn) has left Khong River House, a 2013 James Beard “Best New Restaurant” semifinalist during his brief tenure as original executive chef, to return home full time to North Miami’s **Oishi Thai**, the Thai/sushi spot he opened in 2005. While a statement from Khong’s management suggests a less-than-amicable split, diners in BT territory can look forward to an Oishi revival, featuring more of the relatively rare dishes from rural northern Thailand (where Bee grew up) that made Khong an instant sensation.

For the first time since opening **Michy’s** in 2006, “chefette” Michelle Bernstein began Sunday brunch service on July 28. From 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the à la carte meal includes dinner menu favorites like shrimp mousse-stuffed squash blossoms with cheese grits, plus homemade pastries (sweet potato bread with ricotta and honey), cereals, and breakfast entrées (orange ricotta pancakes; a fried chicken/waffle sandwich; huevos rancheros with avocado crema).

After the antique deck at **Shucker’s** collapsed into Biscayne Bay in June, giving new meaning to the term “dive bar,” Internet chat has assumed the venerable hangout was gone for good. Not true — at least not yet, according to the BT’s spy network. Two employees have told us that an abbreviated Shucker’s — the small interior bar area only — is raring to reopen, but waiting for approval from the North Bay Village officials.

OPENINGS

Box Park (1111 SW 1st Ave., 305-356-8385). This just-born middle child (second of a three-eatery complex from Nobu veteran Santiago Rodriguez) is totally different from its older sib, The Hoxton. Hox features retro New England beachy décor and food; Box has clean contemporary décor and food following the “local, seasonal, simple” modern mantra to match: Everglades gumbo with wild boar andouille and gator, citrus-cured triggerfish, Florida mango and burrata, house-preserved “Brickell pickles.”

Brasileiro (801 Brickell Bay Dr., 786-502-3829). Sort of a Latin take on the Edge, Steak & Bar concept: a steakhouse even non-carnivores can love. It’s part classic Brazilian rodizio, part contemporary chef-driven creations by Gully Booth. See this issue’s Dining Guide (next page) for details.

Toasted Bagel Company (83 SW 8th St., 305-400-6996). From Khalid



and Islam Mohammed, two brothers from Egypt via the New York metropolitan area (where they operated bagelries for nearly 15 years), this small deli features about a dozen varieties of freshly made bagels, plus homemade cream cheese spreads in varieties from classic (scallion, salmon) to nouvelle (walnut). Also available are a variety of other items that, from a NY deli perspective, range from promising (a homemade whitefish salad sandwich) to puzzling (a taco salad with Fritos).

Palatino (3004 NW 2nd Ave., 786-360-5200). From husband/wife team Ian Curtis (chef) and Nadine Patrice (host), a Jamaican eatery that’s consoling fans of recently gentrified-outta-business Clive’s with the same island classics, at similarly budget prices. See Dining Guide for details. Note: Nadine is not only host of the restaurant, but host of *EcoAlert* on BlogTalkRadio, broadcast from Palatino on Saturday mornings. And with Operation Green Leaves, she’s involved in community garden creation and other environmental projects for school kids. Photos are up front. So bring your own sprouts for some food, and a lesson in where our food comes from.

CLOSINGS

Ouzo’s Greek Taverna has folded less than a year after opening. Owner Liza Meli’s future plans, according to a maddeningly tiny recent Facebook post, include “my new wine/tapas bar coming soon,” but requests for details haven’t been answered so far.

Reggae Tacos (93 SE 2nd St.) Owner Adam Feigeles’s downtown trio (with old-timer The Filling Station & Garage Bar and new Lunch American Style) is now a duo, but not because Miamians don’t dig escovitch veggie or Scotch bonnet beef tacos. According to business partner Rusty Johnson, the Station simply needed to expand and Reggae’s adjacent address was the logical space. There’s good news, too. “We’re considering finding a new location, or turning Reggae into a food truck,” says Rusty, who, by the way, just opened new food truck Passion BBQ (786-571-4227), featuring traditional ’cue and “sides we fiddle with”).

Hungry for more food news? See “BizBuzz,” page 22. Send me your tips and alerts: restaurants@biscaynetimes.com.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 297.

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 restolounge (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 glo-brotrotting 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" (sucking pig, tempura duck egg, truffled potato, and speck "rick") tell the story. \$\$\$\$\$

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

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

Banana & Leaf
234 NE 3rd St., 786-431-5548
Ever get tempted by the convenience of supermarket sushi boxes, but feel uneasy about freshness and disgruntled about sparseness of fillings? In the grab-and-go containers here, raw fish glistens and makis like a plump snow crab roll have a satisfying seafood-to-rice ratio. If you'd rather, dishes on the larger custom menu arrive almost as fast. There is also limited, tasty Southeast Asian fare. Most unbelievable: Prices beat supermarket sushi by far. \$

The Bar at Level 25 (Conrad Hotel)
1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6500
On the Conrad's 25th floor, The Bar's picture-windowed space is not just a watering hole with panoramic views. At lunch it's an elegant sandwich bar; at night it's a raw bar (with pristine coldwater oysters) and (best) a tapas bar serving pintos. That's just the Basque word for tapas, but here there's nothing mere about the generously portioned small plates. They range from traditional items like cod fish equixada and saffron-sautéed Spanish artichokes to inventive inspirations like foie gras and goat cheese-stuffed empanadas. \$\$\$

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

Biscayne Tavern
146 Biscayne Blvd., 305-307-8300
From restaurateur Jeffrey Chodorow, this contemporary tavern seems tailor-made for a newly urbanized neighborhood, inviting residents to hang from breakfast to late-night snack time, over updated comfort food that's globally inspired while adhering to the local/organic mantra. Among expected casual favorites (solid American burgers; Asianesque pork-belly sliders) highlights are items that chef Will Biscoe stamps with his own unique, unpretentiously inventive touches, from small plates (housemade potato chips with blue cheese fondue) to large (a long-bone short rib "chop" with truffle popover; South Florida bouillabaisse). More than 30 craft beers accompany. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Blue Martini
900 S. Miami Ave. #250, 305-981-2583
With a 41-martini menu (plus exotic lighting, late hours, dance floor, and live music most nights), this wildly popular place is more lounge than restaurant. Nonetheless food offerings are surprisingly ambitious, including substantial items like sliced steak with horseradish sauce, as well as shareable light bites – parmesan-topped spinach/artichoke dip, served hot with toasted pita; shrimp and blue crab dip (yes: crab, not faux "krab"); a seductive puff pastry-wrapped and honey-drizzled baked brie. Come at happy hour (4:00-8:00 p.m. daily) for bargain drink/snack specials, and lots of locals. \$\$

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. \$\$

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

MIAMI

BRICKELL/DOWNTOWN

Atrio
1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6529
Admittedly, the Conrad Hotel's top-end restaurant has had its ups and downs since its early days as one of the few exciting fine-dining restaurants in the Brickell/downtown area. But Atrio is ready for rediscovery. Despite Brickell's recent restaurant explosion, few venues are as spectacularly suitable for a sophisticated breakfast, lunch, or dinner for grown-ups who'd rather not shout over DJs. Panoramic views of Miami from the 25th floor are now matched by locally oriented dishes, including a mango/lime mayo-dressed lobster sandwich, crisp-skinned snapper with grapefruit salsa and basil aioli, a bracing orange tart, even citrus butter in the bread basket. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Brasileiro
801 Brickell Bay Dr., 786-502-3829
Fittingly, the indoor/outdoor bay-view space in the Four Ambassadors, occupied by Miami's first Brazilian rodizio restaurant back in the early 1980s, is now home to a 21st-century upgrade. For insatiable carnivores and fans of Latin America's best dinner show, there's the traditional parade of tableside, sword-wielding gauchos carving all-you-can-eat meats, including must-not-miss medium-rare picanhas, delectably fat-capped sirloin. For more modern and/or light eaters, prepared dishes by Gully Booth, one of Miami's best-kept-secret chefs, include goat cheese croquettes, stuffed dates, and crab cakes Martha Stewart once proclaimed the best she'd eaten. \$\$\$

MIDTOWN/WYNWOOD/DESIGN DISTRICT

Palatino
3004 NW 2nd Ave., 786-360-5200
When longtime favorite Jamaican joint Clive's fell victim to gentrification, few expected to find similarly skilled old-school Caribbean-American soul food in Wynwood again, especially not at old-school prices. But that's what this small, super-friendly mom-and-pop spot serves up: breakfasts like ackee and salt fish, fried dumpling and callaloo, or an egg/maple sausage/cheese grits combo; plates (with sides) of oxtails, curry goat, jerk chicken; richly crusted piquant chicken or meat patties that contend with Miami's best. Surprises include homemade pastries, and \$1 ice cream cones in tropical flavors like soursop. \$\$\$

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 fat fattiness. There's other 'cue, too, including big (not baby) ribs, and respectable brisket. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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

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

Time for Wine
2200 NE 2nd Ave., 786-409-4898
This wine store/tapas bar is a labor of love, in a stretch of Wynwood that still needs lots of love, from businessman David Taboada – who positively radiates enthusiasm for his "hobby." Don't be discouraged by the car lots and other unscenic surroundings. The ambience inside is as casually hip as the wine selection, priced astonishingly well (many bottles around \$10-\$15). Consume on-premises for a mere \$5 corkage fee, waived at happy hour. To accompany, there are housemade traditional tapas, panini, and charcuterie/cheese boards, plus one substantial daily-changing lunch special. \$\$

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Sumo Sushi Bar & Grill
17630 Collins Ave., 305-682-1243
Sushi may well have been served in Sunny Isles before this longtime neighborhood favorite opened, but Sumo was the neighborhood's first sushi bar to double as a popular lounge/hangout as well as restaurant. Ladies' nights are legend. While Thai and Chinese dishes are available, as well as purist nigiri, few can resist the truly sumo-wrestler-size maki rolls, the more over-the-top, the better. Our bet for biggest crowd pleaser: the spicy Pink Lady (shrimp tempura, avocado, mango, cilantro, and spicy mayo, topped with rich scallop-studded "dynamite" sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

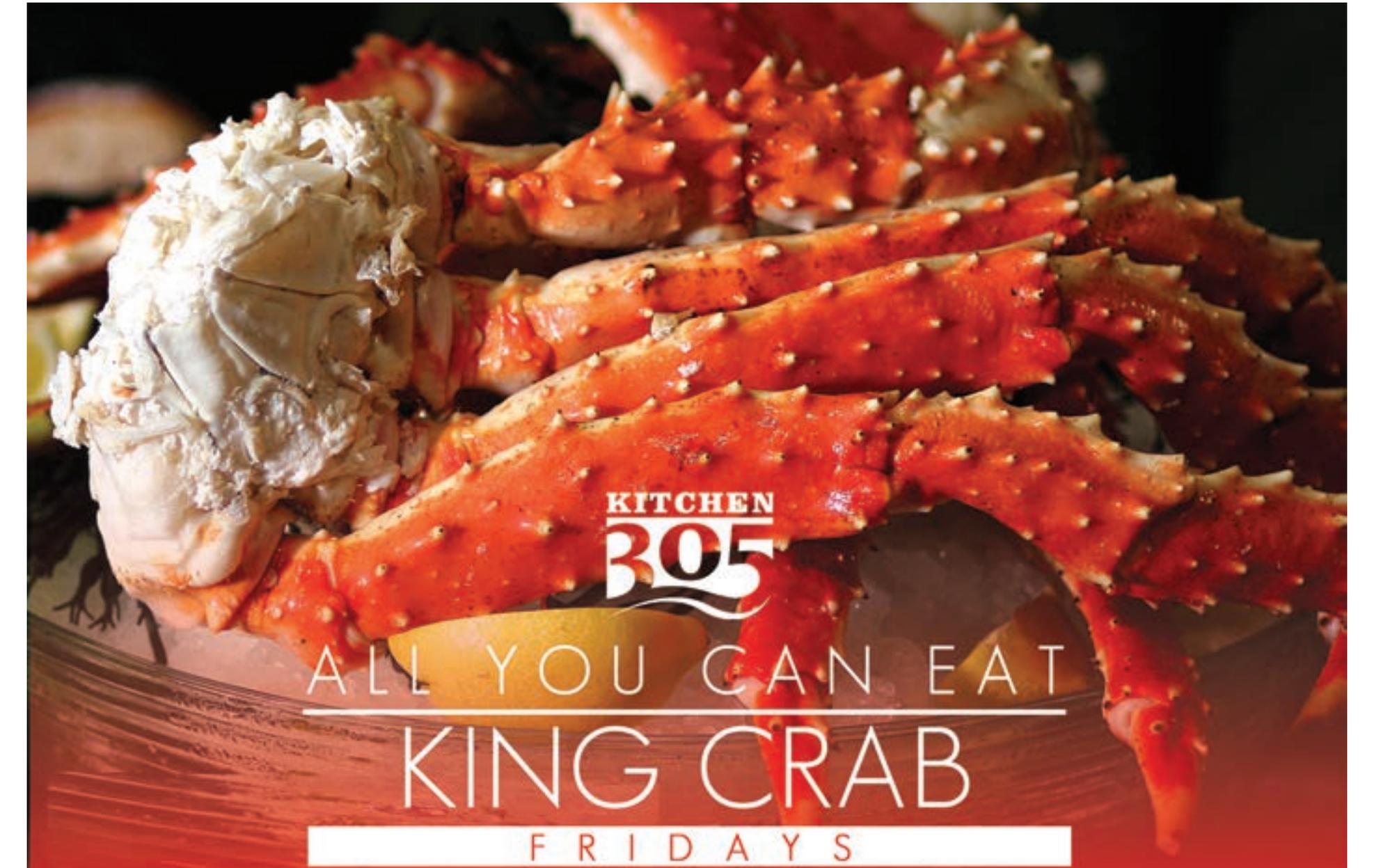
AVENTURA/HALLANDALE

La Montanara
18855 NE 29th Ave., 305-974-0167
A lushly vine-covered walkway leading to the door and back patio of this secluded but expansive restaurant serves notice that diners are in for an exclusive Italian experience. Ilario Giunchi, co-founder of Caracas's famed original La Montanara, has brought much of the menu to this second location, including housemade pastas and creative carpaccios like a delicate crudo version of vitello tonnato. Whatever else you order, don't miss the signature mascarpone/prosciutto focaccias from the beautifully tiled stone pizza oven. Budgeting diners: Explore weekday lunch specials, which include sides. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

Ceviche Piano
140 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414
Owners Martin and Charo Villacorta, a married chef/pastry chef team, think of this eatery as a relocation (in the same downtown plaza) and reinvention of their former "best kept secret" spot Martini 28. Most dramatic changes: upscaled size, and with its glamorous white piano, upgraded elegance. The menu has also been altered to be less of a global wildcard. Focus is now strongly on Peruvian cuisine, including a shrimp/calamari-smothered fish fillet with aji amarillo cream sauce. But no worries, old fans. Some of the old favorite dishes remain. \$\$

Chophouse Miami
300 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-938-9000
Formerly Miami'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. \$\$\$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 Chihuahua cheese casserole with chorizo and pesto. The difference: This place, housed in the former location of short-lived La Broche, has an even more upscale ambience than Dolores – including a million-dollar water view. \$\$\$

Cvi.che 105

505 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

215 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-421-8800

Just two words, "Daniel Boulud," should be enough for foodies craving creative French/American comfort food to run, not walk, to this restaurant. Downtown's db is indeed an absentee celeb chef outpost, but on-site kitchen wizard Matthieu Godard flawlessly executes dishes ranging from the original db Bistro's signature foie gras/short rib/black truffle-stuffed burger to local market-driven dishes. Especially strong are seafood preparations, whether sauced with a refined choron or lustily garnished with Provencal accompaniments like tender sea scallops with chick-pea panisse. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

D-Dog House

50 SW 10th St., 305-381-7770

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

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-403-3103

From the stylish setting in Miami's historic Firehouse No. 4, one would expect a mighty pricy meal. But entrées, which range from Nuevo Latino-style ginger/orange-glazed pork tenderloin to a platter of Kobe mini-burgers, all cost either \$18 or \$23. And the price includes an appetizer – no low-rent crapola, either, but treats like Serrano ham croquetas, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glam rooftop patio. \$\$\$

Dominique Bistro-Club

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-371-8859

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

Edge, Steak & Bar

1435 Brickell Ave., 305-358-3535

Replacing the Four Seasons' formal fine dining spot Acqua, Edge offers a more kick-back casual welcoming vibe. And in its fare there's a particularly warm welcome for non-carnivores. In chefs-driven seafood items (several inventive and unusually subtle ceviches and tartares; a layered construction of corvina

encrusted in a jewel-bright green pesto crust, atop red piquillo sauce stripes and salad; lobster corn soup packed with sweet lobster meat; more) and a farm-to-table produce emphasis make this one steakhouse where those who don't eat beef have no beef. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Elwoods Gastro Pub

188 NE 3rd Ave., 305-358-5222

Cordial English owners, classic rock music (sometimes live), and updated classic pub fare make this hangout a home. Made from scratch with artisan ingredients, traditional Brit bites like fish and chips can't be beat – thick pieces of crispy beer-battered moist cod, served with hand-cut fries and "mushy [mashed] peas," plus housemade tartar sauce and ketchup. All desserts are also made in-house, including a 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 Psilaki, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Fabien's

605 Brickell Key Dr., 305-364-5512

From off-shore, Brickell Key looks like a solid condo canyon, but it has secrets, including this eatery, whose refined but almost rural-feeling indoor/outdoor space, plus its traditional bistro menu, turn a business lunch into a short sojourn in the French countryside. The \$20, 20-minute, three-course "executive" menu, featuring steak/frites with herbed maitre d'hotel butter, is irresistible, but don't neglect harder-to-find classics like salmon Grenobloise with particularly lemony capered beurre blanc, Perigord flake (with duck "prosciutto" and foie gras), or for dessert, a flakey praline cream-filled Paris-Brest pastry. \$\$-\$\$\$\$

Fado Irish Pub

900 S. Miami Ave. #200, 786-924-0972

Unlike most Miami "Irish" pubs, which serve mostly American bar food, rarely foraging past fish and chips or shepherd's pie, Fado (pronounced "fado") 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 boxy, a grated/mashed potato pancake. Try corned beef rolls (boxy wraps, with creamy mustard sauce and cabbage slaw), or smoked salmon on mini-boxy "blini," with capers and horseradish sauce. There's a seasonal menu, too. \$\$

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 foccacia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pasta like seafood-packed fettuccine al 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. \$\$

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 Haws and this new location in the Jade Residences. Golden Pockets (tofu crépes 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 ambience of a classic New England hangout, and upscaled "down shore" food to match: Maine lobster rolls, on brioche rather than hot dog rolls; a luxe take on Québécoise poutine (from-scratch fries with Vermont cheddar and duck confit gravy); an especially lavish clam bake. Also appealingly different from the Miami norm: frequent live bands of many musical genres in the comfortable lounge area, plus almost spookily competent service. \$\$\$

Il Gabbiano

335 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-373-0063

Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this ultra-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. \$\$\$

Jamon Iberico Pata Negra Restaurant

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 Provencal homeland. \$\$

La Sandwicherie

34 SW 8th St., 305-374-9852

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

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Ter., 305-372-2333

At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete American breakfasts. At lunch, generously salad-garnished, open-faced tartines are irresistible. But sophisticated salads and homemade soups make the choice tough. And do not skip dessert. Superb sweets include rich almond/fresh raspberry or properly tangy lemon tarts, traditional Madeleines, airy layered mousses, and addictive mini-macaron sandwich cookies with daily-changing fillings. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

1 W. Flagler St., 305-789-9929

Like its Midtown and North Miami Beach siblings, this Lime Fresh serves up carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

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. Sourcing, often with multiple but balanced portions, is especially noteworthy. The prices? A steal. \$-\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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.

Medialunas Calentitas

919 Brickell Ave., 305-517-3303

At this first U.S. location of a Uruguayan chain, the signature specialty's crescent-like shape says "croissant." But medialunas don't have croissants' puff-pastry flakiness; they're more substantial buttery breakfast rolls. And either simply syrup-glazed or stuffed (with ham and cheese, dulce de leche, more), they make a terrific Latin comfort-food breakfast or snack on the run. The same is true for equally bargain-priced empanadas (three varieties with distinctive fillings from Uruguay, Argentina, or Mexico) and tiny but tasty migas sandwiches like the elaborate Olympic: ham, cheese, lettuce, tomato, peppers, eggs, olives. \$

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 scrum pious street food. We've happily assembled whole meals of the vegetarian chaat (snacks) alone. And dosa (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. \$-\$\$\$

Momi Ramen

5 SW 11th St., 786-391-2392

Banish all thoughts of packaged instant "ramen." Perfectionist chef/owner Jeffrey Chen (who cooked for more than a decade in Japan), changes his mostly ramen-only menu often, but constants are irresistibly chewy handmade noodles; soups based on creamy, intensely porky tonkotsu broth (made from marrow bones simmered all day); meats like pork belly and oxtail; and authentic toppings including marinated soft-cooked eggs, pickled greens, more. Other pluses: It's open 24/7, and the ramen ranks with the USA's best. Minuses: It's cash only, and the ramen might be the USA's most expensive. \$\$\$

MPP Brickell

141 SW 7th St., 305-400-4610

Tasty Peruvian eateries aren't rare in Miami. Peruvian fine-dining restaurants are. In the tastefully toned-down but still glam space formerly housing Andú, this second location of Lima's

popular Mi Propriedad Privada specializes in familiar flavors presented with seriously upscaled preparations, plating, and prices. But many ceviches, tiraditos, and starters (like especially artful layered/molded mashed potato/seafood causas, or clever panko-breaded fusion "causa makis") come in trios for taste-testing. And ceviche lovers score on Tuesdays, when all-you-can-eat costs the same as a trio. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

My Ceviche

1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-960-7825

When three-time James Beard "Rising Star Chef" nominee Sam Gorenstein opened the original My Ceviche in SoBe, in 2012, it garnered national media attention despite being a tiny take-away joint. Arguably, our newer indoor/outdoor Brickell location is better. Same menu, featuring local fish prepared onsite, and superb sauces including a kicky roasted jalapeño/lime mayo), but this time with seats! What to eat? Ceviches, natch. But grilled or raw fish/seafood tacos and burritos, in fresh tortillas, might be even more tempting. Pristine stone-crab claws from co-owner Roger Duarte's George Stone Crab add to the choices. \$\$

Naoe

661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263

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

neMesis Urban Bistro

1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-415-9911

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

Novocento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chermia (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 greaseburgers 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. \$\$

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 Pokémon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-blistered crusts, crisp outside and airy/chewy inside, but that's what you'll consistently find here and a newer take-out/delivery-only Midtown branch. And unlike many artisan pizzerias, Pieducks doesn't get cheesy with cheese quantity (though we like that extra cheese is an option). Elaborate salads complete the menu. \$

Pier 94

94 SE 1st St., 305-379-5652

Tucked into "The Village," a collection of courtyard eateries far from any waterfront, this ceviche bar specializes in fresh seafood dishes from chef/owner Alex Del Corral's native Peru, but also features famous Peruvian meat and poultry dishes (including a refined aji de gallina, chicken in aji pepper-spiced cream sauce). Emphasis is particularly strong on Peru's penchant for fusion food, including traditional Chifa (Chinese-Peruvian) rice or noodle stir-fries. But the chef also fuses classic and creative influences. Try contemporary 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 restoulounge 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 attest: pumpkin cream, pancetta, smoked scamorza cheese. \$

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 giraffe, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarragon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$\$

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 dosa (lacy rice crepes with a variety of savory fillings) and uttapam, thicker pancakes, layered with onions and chilis, both served with sambar and chutney. \$\$

The River Oyster Bar

650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked – fire-roasted with soffritto butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001

This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that's haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn't fear; though nachos aren't available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between freshly made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-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., 305-377-9511

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. \$-\$\$

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Stanzione 87

87 SW 8th St., 305-606-7370

Though Neopolitan-style pizza isn't the rarity it was here a decade ago, this is Miami's only pizzeria certified authentic by Italy's Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana. This means following stringent rules regarding oven (wood-fired), baking time (90 seconds maximum, here closer to 50), tomatoes (imported San Marzano), olive oil (extra-virgin), even flour (tipo 00, for bubbly-light crusts). Toppings do exceed the three original choices served in 19th-century Naples, but pies like the Limone (fresh mozzarella, pecorino, lemons, arugula, EVOO) prove some rules should be broken. \$\$

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 entrees, 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? \$\$

Temaris

1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-836-2747

In Japan, temaris are ornamented hand balls, used since the Seventh Century for sport and as good luck folk-art objects. At this Japanese/Latin hot spot, temaris are reinterpreted, both playfully and artfully, as beautiful, bite-size sushi balls (each about half the size of normal nigiri): vinegary rice topped with sliced raw fish or beef, plus nipples constructed from several of the eatery's dozen-and-a-half sauces. Fancier mini-balls feature fusion combinations like spicy tuna, almonds, and tobiko, or substitute crispy rice. Normal-size makis, small plates, and desserts are also fun. \$\$-\$\$\$

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. \$\$

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 Fonz 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. \$

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 has't Daniel Boulud's fame, but she does have classic European-type technical skills, combined with contemporary creativity that turns even ultimately old-fashioned items, like a pork/cabbage strudel, into 21st century fine-dining fare. Both décor and service, similarly, are 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 hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistolounge." The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with rigatoni for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

Compared to other restaurants with such an upscale power-lunch/dinner setting, most prices are quite affordable here, especially if you stick to the Miami Spice-priced date-dinner menu, or happy hour, when seafood items like crab-cake "sliders" are half price. Most impressive, though, are seasonal stone crabs (from Truluck's own fisheries, and way less expensive than Joe's) and other seafood that, during several visits, never tasted less than impeccably fresh, plus that greatest of Miami restaurant rarities: informed and gracious service. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Tuyo

415 NE 2nd St., 305-237-3200

Atop the revolutionary Miami Culinary Institute, this upscale eatery, unlike the café downstairs, isn't student-run. Rather it's designed to showcase school ideals — including sustainability as well as definitive Miami cuisine. The changing menu, from a culinary Dream Team headed by "New World Cuisine" inventor/MCI instructor Norman Van Aken (plus former protégés Jeffrey Brana and Travis Starwalt), mixes citrus-inflected creamy conch chowder and other pioneering signatures with new inventions like mind-reelingly multidimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and bursting ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$\$

Wok Town

119 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9993

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo Japones veteran) may initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proof: a startlingly savory miso beef salad, with sesame/ginger/scallion dressing. Bubble tea, too! \$

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

This Miami River restolounge has a London parent on San Pellegrino's list of the world's best restaurants, and a similar menu of world-class, Izakaya-style smallish plates (robata-grilled items, sushi, much more) meant for sharing over drinks. Suffice to say that it would take maybe a dozen visits to work your way through the voluminous menu, which offers ample temptations for vegetarians as well as carnivores. Our favorite is the melt-in-your-mouth pork belly with yuzu/mustard miso dip, but even the exquisitely-garnished tofu rocks. \$\$\$\$

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

3 Chefs Chinese Restaurant

1800 Biscayne Blvd. #105, 305-373-2688

Until this eatery opened in late 2010, the solid Chinese restaurants in this neighborhood could be counted on the fingers of no hands. So it's not surprising that most people concentrate on Chinese and Chinese/American fare. The real surprise is the remarkably tasty, budget-priced, Vietnamese fare. Try pho, 12 varieties of full-flavored beef/rice noodle soup (including our favorite, with well-done flank steak and flash-cooked eye round). All can be customized with sprouts and fresh herbs. Also impressive: Noodle combination plates with sautéed meats, salad, and spring rolls. \$\$

B Sweet

20 NE 41st St., 305-918-4453

At this homey neighborhood jewel, located in a former apartment building, husband/wife team Tom Worthach 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 Worthach, 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. \$\$\$

Basani's

3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-925-0911

Despite this tiny place's modern décor, the family-run ambiance and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic rolls, either, or sinful zeppole (fried dough) for dessert. There's more complex fare, like chicken à la Francese, too. And they deliver. \$\$

Bengal

2010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-1976

At this Indian eatery the décor is cool and contemporary: muted gray and earth-tone walls, tasteful burgundy banquettes. And the menu touts "Modern Indian Cuisine" to match the look. Classicists, however, needn't worry. America's favorite familiar north Indian flavors are here, though dishes are generally more mildly spiced and presented with modern flair. All meats are certified halal, Islam's version of kosher — which doesn't mean that observant orthodox Jews can eat here, but Muslims can. \$\$\$

Best Friends

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999

On a restaurant-starved stretch of Biscayne Boulevard, this spot serves the same sort of simple but satisfying Italian fare (antipasti, soups, salads, pizzas) as its older sibling, South Miami's Blu Pizzeria, plus burgers. The thin-crust, pliable pizzas, though lacking burn blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzones (like the blu oceano, fatty filled with mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, and fresh tomatoes). Hefty half-pound burgers come similarly stuffed rather than topped. A sheltered patio and full bar make the place a pleasant neighborhood lounge, too. \$\$

Bin No. 18

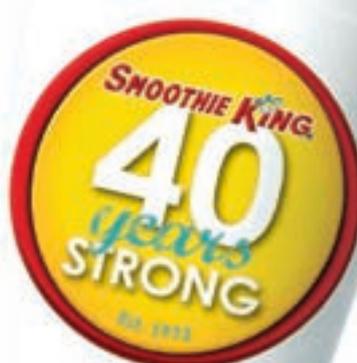
1800 Biscayne Blvd., 786-235-7575

At this wine bar/café, the décor is a stylish mix of contemporary (high loft ceilings) and Old World (tables made from wine barrels). Cuisine is similarly geared to the area's smart new residents: creative sandwiches and salads at lunch, tapas and larger internationally themed Spanish, Italian, or French charcuterie platters at night. Though the place is small and family-run friendly, chef Alfredo Patino offers sophisticated snacks like the figgiotto: 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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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-ed, 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-ticked fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd., 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust-ed 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. \$\$\$

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 Cypress Room

3620 NE 2nd Ave., 305-520-5197

Deer and boar heads on wood-paneled walls juxtapose with crystal chandeliers at this tiny fourth restaurant in Michael Schwartz's burgeoning empire, evoking feelings of dining in a century-old millionaire's hunting lodge — in miniature. Many dishes are similarly fun fantasies of 1920s Florida fine dining, pairing yesteryear's rustic proteins (including wild game) and veggies with preparations that are ultimately refined interpretations of the past: antelope/wild mushroom gnocchi; "French onion soup" with a sort of gruyere tuile float instead of the usual goey melt, served on a lacy dolly. Don't miss the royal red shrimp, or Hedy Goldsmith's desserts. \$\$\$

Daily Melt

3401 N. Miami Ave. #123, 305-573-0101

Masterminded by Chef Allen Susser, the concept is to bring diners the comfort of homemade grilled cheese — like mom's, if

mom hadn't usually burned the bread and improperly melted the cheese. The Melt's custom grill press browns/melts sandwiches perfectly every time. Additionally, Susser tested numerous all-American cheeses (no imports or artisanal products) for goopy goodness. Mom probably also didn't create combinations like cheddar with green apples and Virginia ham, or allow a simple signature grilled American cheese to be dressed up with truffle butter. Accompaniments include roasted tomato soup, chopped salads, and sweet melts like s'mores. \$

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar — sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks — a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

El Bajareque

278 NW 36th St., 305-576-5170

Dozens of little Latin American eateries, all looking almost identically iffy, line 36th Street. But this family-owned "bajareque" (shack) is one where you definitely want to stop for some of Miami's most tasty, and inexpensive, Puerto Rican home cooking, from mondongo (an allegedly hangover-curing soup) to 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 tamals but with a tuber rather than corn masa dough, or empanadas with savory shrimp stuffing. \$

Egg & Dart

4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022

While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, an often warm 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. \$\$

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

Feverish Pops

Shops at Midtown Miami

3552 NE 1st Ave., 305-482-1832
When kids are sick, you take them to a doctor. If your inner child feels feverish, though, the cure is Felecia Hatcher's handcrafted, vegan-friendly, natural and organic frozen treats — popsicles reinvented for grown-ups. At this literal mom-and-pop shop, Hatcher and husband Derek Pearson offer more than 25 changing flavors, some spiked (like locally sourced mango with bourbon), others just sophisticated (pineapple basil, strawberry balsamic, chocolate banana). No artificial flavors, no refined sugars. Particularly playful inner kids can customize with coatings ranging from nuts to truly nuts: pop rocks, potato chips, and more. \$

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. \$\$\$

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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 tripeleta containing roast pork, bacon, Black Forest ham, provolone, and caramelized onions. \$\$

Joey's Italian Café
2506 NW 2nd Ave., 305-438-0488

The first new restaurant in the Wynwood Café District, this stylish indoor/outdoor Italian hangout is as casually cool as one would hope – and as affordable. There's a five-buck half-serving of spaghetti al pomodoro and respectable vino for under \$30. And few can resist delicately thin, crunchily-crust pizzas like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Carbonara. Pastas are fresh; produce is largely local; the mosaic-centered décor is minimalist but inviting. And no need to be wary of the warehouse district at night: Valet parking is free. \$\$-\$\$\$

Kouzina Greek Bistro
3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-1825

This festive indoor/outdoor restorolounge has native Greek owners – a chef, Alexis Apostolidi, also from Greece but with local critical kudos for her contemporary Greek creations at now-defunct Ariston; and a menu centering on mezés – shareable small plates, both classical (like tzatziki, hummus, and eggplant dips) and original (bacalao croquettes with garlic purée and roasted beet coulis; feta-filled phyllo “envelopes” drizzled with mountain thyme honey). Limited but luscious entrées, like honey-glazed pork belly with charred fennel and a polenta-like semolina “cake,” also fuse chef-driven invention and evocatively simple traditional flavors. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

La Latina
3509 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-9655

At last, an authentic Venezuelan arepera (purveyor of homemade arepas, with a variety of meat, cheese, and veggie fillings) that isn't out in the boonies – and decidedly isn't a dive. With colorful décor concocted from recycled objects, this space, though small, has truly eclectic, Midtown style. The signature corn cakes, crisped outside and fluffy inside, put sodden supermarket specimens to shame. And cachapas (softer, sweeter corn pancakes folded around mozzarella-like fresh cheese) or bollarepitas (cheese-stuffed deep-fried corn cakes, with tangy nata dip) may be even tastier. \$\$-\$\$

La Provence
2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002
(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Lagniappe
3425 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-0108

In New Orleans, “lagniappe” means “a little extra,” like the 13th doughnut in a baker's dozen. And that's what you get at this combination wine and cheese bar/backyard BBQ/entertainment venue. Choose artisan cheeses and charcuterie from the fridges, hand them over when you pay (very little), and they'll be plated with extras: olives, bread, changing luscious condiments. Or grab fish, chicken, veggies, or steak (with salad or cornbread) from the hidden yard's grill. Relax in the comfie mismatched furniture, over extensive wine/beer choices and laidback live music. No cover, no attitude. \$\$

Latin Café 2000
2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian jalea mixta (marinated mixed seafood), or paella Valenciana from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yucafied ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café
4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill
Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463
Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit,

as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is “fast casual” rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor
3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is new 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 mezés: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The mezze 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 exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's “piadenas,” saladlike seasonal/regional ingredient combinations atop heavenly homemade flatbreads. Cocktails feature ingredients from za'atar to salmon roe. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mercato
4141 NE 2nd Ave., 786-332-3772

Adjacent to Dena Marino's hot hangout MC Kitchen, the contemporary Italian chef's artisanal market and breakfast/lunch café is for diners wanting a quicker (but not fast-food) sit-down meal, or inventive take-out. Pressed for time? Try a pressed sandwich like Marino's Italian Cubano (porchetta, prosciutto cotto, Swiss, pickles, and Dijon mustard dressing, on ciabatta). Along with hot or cold sandwiches, there's a wide variety of homemade breakfast pastries, breads, cookies, and fresh-baked quiches, plus salads and a daily-changing soup. Market items include exotic jams, craft beers, and Marino's private label EVOO. \$\$\$

Mercadito Midtown
3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423

Some people frequent this fashionable restorolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carmitas (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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 hangout 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 restorolounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts, Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oak Tavern 35 NE 40th St., 786-391-1818

With a festively lantern-lit oak tree on the outdoor dining patio and stylishly playful lamps mimicking oaks inside, chef/restaurateur David Bracha of River Oyster Bar has transformed a previously cold space to warm. Food is equally inviting. The mostly small-plates seasonal menu roams the globe from supreme Vietnamese banh mi (with pork belly and foie gras) to down-home buttermilk biscuits with bacon butter, and homemade charcuterie. If available, don't miss Hawaiian-inspired steelhead poke; substituting the salmonlike but more delicate trout for the usual tuna transports this crudo to heavenly heights. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Orange Café + Art 2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070

The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, flocchi pouches filled with pears and cheese), and house-baked pastries. \$

Pasha's 3801 Biscayne Blvd., 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/argula – would be draw enough. But pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$

Primo Pizza Miami 3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedit. Thankfully that's the speciality of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

Sakaya Kitchen Shops at Midtown Miami, Buena Vista Avenue 305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop). But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$

Sake Room 275 NE 18th St., 305-755-0122

Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find 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. \$\$\$

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

Soi Chinese Kitchen 645 NW 20th St., 305-482-0238

No chop suey. No kung pao anything, either. In fact, anything on Soi's menu that sounds like something from a normal Chinese eatery won't be: char sui ribs come with delicate corn pancakes, wonton soup is kafir lime broth with a mushroom/truffle-butter-stuffed ravioli, lo mein is housemade noodles with pork belly and sous vide 63-degree egg. Basically it's contemporary Chinese fine dining fare similar in creativity and quality ingredients to ultra-upscale Hakkasan's, but served by a tiny take-out joint (with a few patio tables and counter stools) at neighborhood prices. \$\$

Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill 3250 NE 1st Ave. 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tony Chan's Water Club 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scallion, ginger, cilantro, and subtly sweet/salty sauce. And Peking duck is served as three traditional courses: crêpe-wrapped crispy skin, meat sautéed with crisp veggies, savory soup to finish. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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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. \$\$

DeVita's 7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

This Italian/Argentine pizzeria, housed in a charming bungalow and featuring a breezy patio, covers multicultural bases. If the Old World Rucola pizza (a classic Margherita topped with arugula, prosciutto, and shredded parmesan) doesn't do the trick, the New World Especial (a Latin pie with hearts of palm and boiled eggs) just might. Also available are pastas, salads, sandwiches, dinner entrées (eggplant parmigiana with spaghetti, lomito steak with Argentinean potato salad), and desserts (tiramisu or flan). \$

Dogma Grill 7030 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-3433

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese Taylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

East Side Pizza 731 NE 79th St., 305-758-5351

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer entrées like spaghetti and meatballs, but East Side also has pumpkin ravioli in brown butter/sage sauce, wild mushroom ravioli, and other surprisingly upscale choices, including imported Peroni beer. As for the pizza, they are classic pies, available whole or by the slice, made with fresh plum tomato sauce and Grande mozzarella (considered the top American pizza cheese). Best seating for eating is at the sheltered outdoor picnic tables. \$

Fiorito 5555 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-2899

While owners Max and Cristian Alvarez's description of their eatery as "a little Argentinean shack" is as charming as the brothers themselves, it conveys neither the place's cool warmth nor the food's exciting elegance. Dishes are authentically Argentine, but far from standard steakhouse stuff. Chef Cristian's background at popular pop-up The Dining Room becomes instantly understandable in dishes like orange and herb-scented lechon confit (with pumpkin mash, pickled cabbage salad, and Dijon mojo) or sopa de calabaza, derived from Argentina's peasant stew locro, but here a refined, creamy soup. Many more surprises – even steaks. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Federal Food, Drink & Provisions 5132 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-9559

At the Fed, expect what locals know to expect from sommelier/chef team Aniece Meinhold and Cesar Zapata, whose previous restaurant concepts have included Blue Piano (gourmet stoner snacks) and Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea. That is, expect the unexpected. The Fed is an updated tavern featuring creative, from-scratch takes on traditional American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired "pig wings" (pork drummettes 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. \$

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 choy, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Magnum Lounge 709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambience, 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. \$\$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 croquettes. 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 carries out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moshi Moshi 7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

News Lounge 5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-758-9932

Mark Soyka's new News is, as its name suggests, more a friendly neighborhood hangout and watering hole than a full-fledged eatery. Nevertheless the menu of light bites is – along with other lures like an inviting outdoor patio and rest rooms that resemble eclectic art galleries – part of the reason visitors stay for hours. Especially recommended are fat mini-burgers with chipotle chutney; a brie, turkey, and mango chutney sandwich on crusty baguette; and what many feel is the original café's Greatest Hit: creamy hummus with warm pita. \$

Ni.Do. Caffè & Mozzarella Bar 7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-960-7022

Don't let this little café's easily overlooked strip-mall location, or its informal interior, fool you. The warm welcome is authentically Italian, as are cleverly crafted antipasti, simple but full-flavored pastas, and homemade pastries (from rosemary breadsticks to fruit-topped dessert tortas) that will transport your taste buds to Tuscany. And the homemade mozzarella or burrata cheeses – truly milk elevated to royalty – will transport you to heaven. A small market area provides Italian staples, plus superb salumi and the magnificent mozz, to go. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus 1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor Biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauerwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Siam Rice 7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516

You'll find all the familiar favorite Thai and Japanese items here, and prices for curries and noodle dishes (all customizable regarding choice of protein, preparation, and heat level) are especially good at lunch. But don't overlook somewhat pricier specialties like a deep-fried yet near-greaseless boneless half duck with veggies in red curry sauce. There's also an

unusually extensive list of salads, some with inventive fusion touches, like a grilled shrimp/soba salad featuring traditional Thai flavors (sriracha chiles, fish sauce, lime) and Japanese green tea noodles. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soyka 5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (divided eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried focchi 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. \$\$\$

Sweet Saloon 7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

At this dessert/snack/cocktail bar, from the owner of Moonchine, you'll find live and DJ entertainment, too, from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. – assuming you can find the place, that is. It's above the pan-Asian eatery, up a hidden back staircase. Asian savory snacks include dumplings, edamame, krab rangoons, satays. Desserts range from homey American (NY cheesecake, mini cupcakes) to continental (strawberries melba, housemade Belgian waffles, a shareable chocolate fondue/fruit platter). Actually, some cocktails double as desserts (a Godiva dark chocolate martini) or Asian savories (infusion jars of Stoli and lemongrass). \$

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 glacial 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 Deisa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Culler) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

The Crab House 1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

www.crabhouseseafood.com
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. Freshness fanatics will be happy with à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oggi's Caffè 1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Sabor Latin Restaurant & Cafe

1880 79th St. Cswy., 305-741-2020
This family-run restaurant serves big portions of homey traditional food from several Latin American countries, including Cuba (pan con bistec, ropa vieja), Mexico (nachos, tacos, quesadillas), and Peru (lomo saltado). But the specialty is Colombian classics, from snacks like empanadas to a bandeja paisa combo (grilled steak, chorizo, a gargantuan crispy chicharron strip, fried egg, arepa, plantains, beans, rice). Particularly recommended: daily specials including two meal-in-a-bowl chicken soups, ajiao, and sancocho. If you've wondered about the much-debated difference, here's where to test the taste. \$-\$\$

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638
(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Trio on the Bay

1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234
Several ventures have failed in this expansive indoor/outdoor waterfront space, but that's hard to imagine once you've experienced this stunning incarnation as an exciting yet affordable restaurant/nightclub where food definitely doesn't play second fiddle to entertainment. Former Crystal Café chef Klime Kovacscki 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 house-made sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222
When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Yatcharin 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. \$\$-\$\$\$

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 ambiance. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363
Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public – always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambiance is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food – some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$

PizzaFiore

9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924
Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crusted, oozing-with-goopy-cheese pizzas

reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings – sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$-\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co.

13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254
When people speak of the West Coast as the USA's quality coffeehouse pioneer territory, they're thinking Seattle – and then south through coastal California. North to Alaska? Not so much. But owner Michael Gesser did indeed open this hip place's parent in Fairbanks back in 1993, after years of traveling through every coffee-growing country in the world. 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

1950 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 mock (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 yellowtail 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 leaven 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 achote, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

City Slickers

807 NE 123rd St., 305-891-6565

If you hear "hoagie" and instantly think "\$5 footlong," this health-minded gourmet sub shop will be a revelation. Instead of processed proteins and sad pre-prepared toppings inside factory-produced rolls, you get fresh-baked white, grain, or sundried tomato breads generously stuffed with quality meats (including rotisserie turkeys/chickens and rare roast beef made in-house), sparkling-fresh veggies, and more than a dozen imaginative dressings. Choose a signature sub or build your own. There are also signature or DIY salads and homemade soups, plus craft beers or wines to accompany.

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. \$\$\$

Fish Fish

13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124

Here's what makes this elegantly warm restologue 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 paty 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 (trig-gerfish) 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 long-time Italian eatery remember frequent visits from Miami native

Michelle Bernstein and her parents – when the celeb chef was a kid. The "piccolo" space has since expanded, but the place is still child-friendly, and portions are still prodigious. Most dishes evoke nostalgia, including our favorite white wine/lemon sauce-drenched veal piccata with capers and artichokes. There are surprises not found at old school red-sauce joints, too, like lunchtime's surprisingly tasty Cuban sandwich. \$\$

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 roadhouse ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, and to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissone's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat 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. \$\$\$

Piccolo Pizza

2104 NE 123rd St., 305-893-9550

Pizzas at this spin-off from family-owned Il Piccolo impress even NYC visitors, thanks to recipes proprietor Hubert Benmoussa learned from an authentic Neapolitan pizzaolo. Other favorites here include subs on homemade baguettes and, surprising for a pizzeria, delightfully custardy quiche (Benmoussa is part French). But it would be unthinkable to miss the pies, especially our favorite Italia: subtly sweet tomato sauce, fresh tomatoes, mozzarella, onions, plus mixed greens and uncooked prosciutto on top – both pizza and salad. There are also nicely priced catering trays of finger subs, quiche squares, pizza bites, more. \$\$\$

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-keeyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meat balls, 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 flavor 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 grille has been fired up since 1954 at this nostalgic hang-out. 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 cheeseesteak, 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

Blue Marlin Fish House

2500 NE 163rd St., 305-957-8822

Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers. The featured item is still the house-smoked fish this historic venue began producing in 1938, available in three varieties: salmon, mahi mahi, and the signature blue marlin. But the smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable brisket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779

Proving that national fast-food chains don't have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls "food with integrity." The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn to fillas stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Toppings among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft encountered in town. \$\$\$

Christine's Roti Shop

16721 NE 6th Ave., 305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouveia,

originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill

Intracoastal Mall
3969 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124

Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy's, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crusted fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Chesapeake 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). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 beef 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 exotic like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Monday.....\$9.50
1/2 Deli Sandwich and cup of Soup served with Cole Slaw or Potato Salad

Tuesday.....\$8.95
Tuna Fish Appetizer or Sandwich served with Cole Slaw or Potato Salad. Choice of Bagel or Toast

Wednesday.....\$9.95
Open-faced Turkey Platter served with Mashed Potatoes and House Vegetables

Thursday.....\$9.95
Choice of Corned Beef or Pastrami Sandwich served with choice of Cole Slaw or Potato Salad

Friday.....\$11.95
Nova Appetizer served with Lettuce, Tomato, Onion, Cream Cheese and garnish. Choice of Bagel or Bialy

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Julio's Natural Foods Emporium 1602 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 305-947-4744

Vegetarians and vegans tired of settling for the one sad steamed vegetable entrée tacked onto most menus will be in in pork-free pig heaven. Owner Julio Valderrama's healthy global (though mostly Mediterranean, Mexican, and New American) menu of not-so-small plates, salads, sandwiches/wraps, and organic grain-based platters is so immense you could literally eat for months without repeating – or indulging in poultry and fish dishes. Cooking isn't cutting-edge, but unusual spicing keeps things interesting. Especially recommended: a signature veg-and-feta-packed za'atar flatbread; also slightly sinful sweet potato with butter and cinnamon. \$-\$

Kebab Indian Restaurant 514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonally upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace 330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$

Kings County Pizza 18228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino's flopsy-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 Tononno'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

Like its downtown and Midtown siblings, this Lime Fresh serves up carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

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 fagiole, 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. \$\$\$

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 kham phad nam (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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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, Icee & Tea House 237 NE 167th St. 305-654-4008

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square 54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$-\$

Slices Pizza & Pasta 13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5684

While pizza by the slice is common street food in every city in the USA, this informal Italian eatery offers a variation particularly appropriate to Latin American-influenced Miami: slices served rodizio-style. Brazil's traditional rodizio restaurants feature many different grilled meats, served tableside by a continuing parade of waiters till diners

cry uncle. Here the concept is the same, with dozens of varieties of pizza (plus several pastas) replacing the beef. \$\$

Sushi House 15911 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy Mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unprecedented ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Sake 13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: All sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crunch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tania's Table 18685 W. Dixie Hwy. 305-932-9425

A location at the tail end of a tiny, tired-looking strip mall makes this weekday lunch-only kosher eatery easy to miss. But the cute bistro, an extension of chef Tania Sigal's catering company, is well worth seeking for its unusually varied daily-changing menu – 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

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, mus-sels Chardonnay, and Grouper Brittany. Traditional house favorites remain, and the emphasis is still on fresh fish from local waters. Open daily till 2:00 a.m., the place can get rather festive after midnight, but since the kitchen is open till closing, Tuna's draws a serious late-night dining crowd, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin 73 NE 167th St., 305-405-6346

Too often purist vegetarian food is unskillfully crafted bland stuff, spiced with little but sanctimonious intent. Not at this modest-looking vegan (dairy-free vegetarian) restaurant and smoothie bar. Dishes from breakfast's blueberry-packed pancakes to Caribbean vegetable stews sparkle with vivid flavors. Especially impressive: mock meat (and fake fish) wheat-gluten items that beat many carnivorous competitors. Skeptical? Rightly. But we taste-tested a "Philly cheese steak" sandwich on the toughest of critics – an inflexibly burger-crazy six year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$

Yakko-San 3881 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-947-0064

After sushi chefs close up their own restaurants for the night, many come here for a rare taste of Japanese home cooking, served in grazing portions. Try glistening-fresh strips of raw tuna can be had in maguro neta – mixed with scallions and dressed with habit-forming honey-miso mustard sauce. Other favorites include goma ae (wilted spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

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 oba (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 Pire 1052 Kane Concourse, 305-861-1059

This upscale Lebanese restaurant serves dishes with the sort of understated sophistication that makes clear why Beirut was called the Paris of the East. You'll find familiar Middle Eastern favorites, but many have refinements that lift them above average: pita that's housemade, charmingly fluffy when warm from the oven; falafel incorporating flavorful fava beans with the usual ground chickpeas. Especially appealing are more uncommon items like crisp-fried cauliflower with tahini, feteh (a chickpea casserole "iced" with thick yogurt), and buttery cheese/herb-filled sambusak pastries. Finish exotically with a hookah. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Open Kitchen 1071 95th St., 305-865-0090

If we were on Death Row, choosing a last meal, this very chef-centered lunchroom/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm 9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and 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 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. \$\$

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

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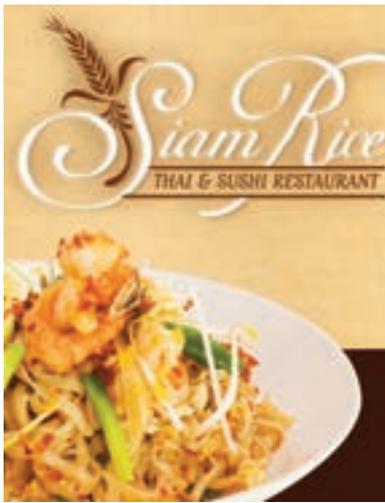
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 relaxing retro yet futuristically earth-friendly (think recycled Coke bottle chairs), beverages ranging from milkshakes to craft beers, and sourced hormone/antibiotic-free, grass-fed Angus burgers on branded buns, for prices rivaling those for fast-food junkburgers, what's not to love? There are also vegetarian quinoa burgers or Kobe dogs, plus "accessories" including hand-cut fries, killer crisp-battered onion rings, freshly made, all-natural frozen custard, and toppings galore. \$

Cadillac Ranch

Village at Gulfstream Park
 921 Silks Run Rd. #1615, 954-456-1031

It's hard to decide if the most fun interpretation of beef here is the weekend prime rib dinner special (with two sides and a meat hunk hefty enough for sandwiches the next day) or the mechanical bull. Party like it's 1980 at this all-American restolounge/sports bar, which includes two outdoor patios with fire pits and, sometimes, live rootsy music. If you miss out on the roast beef (it goes fast), there are burgers, steaks, meal-size salads, and classic bar bites. \$\$-\$\$\$

Fresko

19048 NE 29th Ave., 786-272-3737

Forget thick, dough-wrapped potato knishes and blintzes slathered with sour cream. As its name suggests, this kosher dairy eatery eschews the starch/sugar-laden traditional "favorites" for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crusted designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

Fuji Hana

2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080

A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians — for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield — might want to add the place to their "worth a special drive" list, thanks to chefs' winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$-\$\$\$

Kampai

3575 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410

At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricey but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic "Thai hot"). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$-\$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli

2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555

While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar

18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030

Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no glopplily sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fringy outfit." \$\$-\$\$\$

Pilar

20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777

Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955
 (See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

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

Chef Philip Ho

16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338

Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crusted egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$-\$\$\$

Copper Chimney

18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075

At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation — plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazaz-e-lazzaz (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 homemade 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 fries, 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 majority 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 ravioli 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 pizza and pastas, serves sushi. Particularly tasty: the native Neapolitan pizza chef's truffled taleggio and mushroom pies; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

Timo

17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008

Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannellini bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill

350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016

It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find trout dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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**LITTLE RIVER: 6200 NE 4th CT
FOR SALE | \$695,000**

3,145 SF unique live/work loft warehouse featuring an open floor plan, great natural light, an outdoor-gated deck, and luxurious industrial finishes + allows for multiple uses including office, retail, private showroom, private studio, gallery and live/work.

**TONY ARELLANO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



**DESIGN DISTRICT: 70-74 NE 40 ST
FOR SALE | \$9 M LEASE | \$125 PSF NNN**

Prime design district retail building for lease. Total SF equals 4,500 with a 500 SF urban green space located in the back. Landlord will consider adding SF + additional floors for qualified credit tenants. Will consider long term leases. Also available for sale.

**TONY CHO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



**DESIGN DISTRICT: 3801 N MIAMI AVE
FOR SALE | \$4.6 M**

4,211 SF signalized corner building available for sale. This property will fit a variety of uses including retail, restaurant, or an array of mixed uses. This property allows up to +/- 129,000 SF of gross development and buildings up to 20 stories high.

**TONY CHO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



**DOWNTOWN: ESTABLISHED + SUCCESSFUL
RESTAURANT FOR SALE | \$500,000**

Established restaurant now for sale in the heart of Downtown Miami. Successfully operating for over a decade, this centrally located venue enjoys strong pedestrian traffic. The restaurant also features a separate bar area. 203 seats.

**ANDRES LEMOS | 305 409 3737
alemos@metro1cre.com**



**MIDTOWN: 3557 NE 2 AVE
FOR LEASE | PRICE UPON REQUEST**

Exclusive opportunity to lease prime retail space at the entrance to Miami's most exciting neighborhoods: Midtown & The Design District. Space available from 2,500 - 10,000 SF. Will build to suit.

**TONY ARELLANO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



**LITTLE RIVER: 240 NE 62 ST & 253 NE 61 ST
FOR SALE/LEASE | PRICE UPON REQUEST**

2 warehouses available ranging from 3,300-3,400 SF. Brand new construction. Excellent location minutes away from Downtown Miami, Design District and Miami Beach.

**IRENE DAKOTA | 305 972 8860
idakota@metro1properties.com**



**DESIGN DISTRICT: 4030 N MIAMI AVE
FOR LEASE | \$65 PSF NNN**

Prime street retail located at the entrance of Miami's Design District, only a block away from the 195 exit. This street facing 7,642 SF bi-level space is perfect for a variety of uses. This building is across Egg & Dart.

**TONY CHO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



**BISCAYNE CORRIDOR: 6630 BISCAYNE BLVD
FOR LEASE | \$35 PSF MG**

+/- 2,000 SF high visibility building located on Biscayne Blvd. Building offers ample parking and landlord will deliver the space as a vanilla shell with storefronts, bathrooms along with HVAC.

**TONY ARELLANO | 305 571 9991
info@metro1cre.com**



CONTACT US TODAY IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO BUY, SELL OR LEASE WITHIN THE URBAN CORE. metro1.com