

BISCAYNE

September 2013

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Volume 11 Issue 7

NEW THIS ISSUE

19 amazing advertisers p. 22
Ken Jett's debut column p. 60

Times

Life in the Rail World

**Amtrak may not survive competition from All
Aboard Florida, but All Aboard Florida may not
survive either**

pg 26



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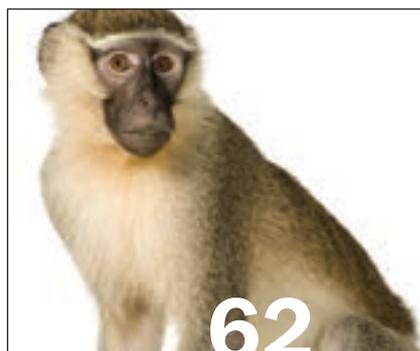


NANCY BATCHELOR Team
From Modern To Mediterranean



CONTENTS

- COVER STORY**
26 Life in the Rail World
- COMMENTARY**
10 Feedback: Letters
16 Cult Following: A New Film
18 Jack King: We Love Rick Scott
20 Urbana: All About the Weather
- OUR SPONSORS**
22 BizBuzz: September 2013
- COMMUNITY NEWS**
44 Slam the Door on Phony Locksmiths
44 W. Dixie Highway: Is Bigger Better?
45 Pay Phones Sprouting Like Mushrooms
- NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENTS**
60 Ken Jett's Upper Eastside Debut
62 Jen Mulls the Monkeys of Miami Shores
64 Jay Ponders Aventura Status Symbols
66 Adam Bemoans Miami's Car Culture
68 Mark Sounds the North Miami Alarm
- ART & CULTURE**
70 Anne Tschida on DWNTWN Art Days
72 Melissa Wallen's Galleries + Museums
75 Events Calendar: Hear Salman Rushdie
- POLICE REPORTS**
76 Derek McCann's Biscayne Crime Beat
- PARK PATROL**
78 Jim W. Harper: Biscayne Bay National Park
- COLUMNISTS**
80 All Things Animal: Grumpy Cat
82 Picture Story: Deadly 1926 Hurricane
83 Your Garden: Go Get Ginger
84 Kids and the City: Really Bad Parents
85 Going Green: He: "I Do," We: "Can Do"
86 Vino: Unusual Whites Score Big
87 Dish: Here Comes Autumn
- DINING GUIDE**
88 Restaurant Listings: 294 Biscayne Corridor Restaurants



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Commentary: LETTERS

District 5 Candidate Forum: Be There!

For all *Biscayne Times* readers in Miami's Upper Eastside who are now part of city commission District 5, a candidate forum will take place 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 8, at Legion Park. Sponsored by the Belle Meade Homeowners Association, the event will feature refreshments, bites, and (presumably) lots of good questions for candidates Jacqui Colyer, Richard Dunn III, Keon Hardemon, and Robert Malone, Jr. *BT* editor Jim Mullin will moderate. For more information, contact Jo Wilder at jwilder@live.com.

Topic of Cancer: America's Billboard Epidemic

Erik Bojnansky's cover story "Billboard Jungle" (August 2013) is a superbly informative article that nailed every key messaging point of the cancerous billboard story. Hats off to Erik and *Biscayne Times* for providing the public with a well-researched, factual article.

I am part of a group call Keep Washington Beautiful and saw this article via "Scenic America" on Facebook feed. Seattle — and every other major American city — is assaulted with this crap. This is a national problem, not just a local problem.

Thank you for publishing "Billboard Jungle." I have sent it on to the Seattle tourism agency, the city council, and downtown business organizations for their education.

Bravo! A hundred times over.

*Heather Lowe
Seattle, Washington*

On the Death of the No-Kill Shelter

Wendy Doscher-Smith's August column, "Another Day, Another Dog Dies," about how Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez and the county commission cut \$19 million from the voter-approved Pets' Trust, thus ending hopes of a no-kill animal shelter, made me physically ill!

These G-D politicians need to be replaced. Sweep the place clean of the political whores who ignore the will of the people and move on. And not just in Miami.

Out with the old political hacks and their pimps, and in with new people who will listen to the voters and work for their community and their country instead of themselves and their whore masters.

This is sickening!

*Joan Bueter
Hollywood*

Sandbar Salute

I just wanted to acknowledge Harriette Yahr for writing a very comprehensive

article about the Haulover Sandbar ("It's a Shoal Thing," August 2013). It's obvious she did a lot of research on this subject. I also liked her writing skills.

*Carole Becker
Quayside*

Founding Fathers Farsighted, Says Logic-Leaping NRA

Great column by Christian Cipriani ("The Guns Need to Go," August 2013). Someday, if we survive, we will look back and wonder how a small group of bullies was able to dictate our gun laws. It is irrational for 90 percent of America to live in fear so that a group of yahoos can run around waving the Confederate flag and brandishing their AK-47s.

The preamble to the Constitution specifically states that this nation was formed to "insure domestic tranquility" — that means exactly the same today as it did when this nation was formed.

However, the Second Amendment, which guarantees the right to bear arms, was written when "arms" referred to a single-shot musket. For anyone to imply that the Founders, living in an agrarian society, envisioned the types of weapons we have today, and the shift from agrarian to an industrial society with all its sociological problems, is preposterous.

Only the NRA can make that leap in logic.

*Alfred Mcknight
El Portal*

Cipriani: An Other-Worldly Experience

Reading Christian Cipriani's anti-gun screed, "The Guns Need To Go," was almost like being in possession of a communication from an alternative universe.

One can only draw two conclusions after wading through all the inaccurate and misleading statements in his opinion piece: A) Mr. Cipriani never watched the George Zimmerman trial on TV and read none of the transcripts or reports; or B) Mr. Cipriani simply chose to ignore all the evidence and testimony, and went with his own preconceived ideas with regard to the role guns play in lawful self-defense.

*Sam Guy
Miami*

Another Miami Waterfront Boondoggle?

I want to compliment Jack King on his great article "Welcome to the Circus"

.....
Continued on page 12



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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 10

(August 2013). I truly enjoyed reading it. I had a particular interest in the paragraphs devoted to the Grove "Harbor" development. I believe King is absolutely correct in his assessment of this project as just another folly in a long list of follies created by the City of Miami.

The article seems to suggest that this project may be fait accompli, and that there may not be anything that can be done to change the course of events set in motion to bring this project to fruition.

I'm not sure I agree with that. In fact, I've started an online petition to create awareness of this ill-conceived development. As of a few minutes ago, 529 have signed the petition, asking the city commission to reconsider its position.

More than 3200 people have viewed the petition in the last seven days since it was posted on MoveOn.org. The petition has raised the profile of this issue considerably, and apparently it is becoming an issue of concern to a great many citizens of Miami.

I'm hopeful that as the date of the election nears, we will have made enough people aware of what is going on that the project will be defeated at the ballot box.

The petition may be found online at petitions.moveon.org/sign/stop-grove-harbor

*Charles Corda
Miami*

Miami Critical Mass: Share the Road Doesn't Mean Hog the Road

Thanks to Jen Karetnick's August column "Ride the High Road," about the Miami Critical Mass (MCM) cycling phenomenon. I live in Edgewater, close to the Latin Café, and bicycle-commute 11 miles each way every day to Doral. On November 6, 2012, I was hit on Tenth Avenue and NW 36th Street by an Escalade that fled the scene. I spent eight hours in Jackson Memorial Hospital that day.

I watched the June Miami Critical Mass from my condo balcony and was appalled. "Share the road" doesn't mean "hog the road." When a signal turns red, stop for it. All the side streets between Biscayne Boulevard and the bay are dead-ends. Let people get home.

Every day I make the dangerous ride home from Doral, mostly along 36th Street. I have drivers who stop to let me cross the SR-826 ramp at 25th Street, or

the SR-112 off-ramp near 42nd Street, and who slow down and move aside when I'm riding down the middle of US 1, trying not to get killed. I need those people to see me as what I am: unprotected and vulnerable, not the guy who held them up for an hour while they tried to get home one night.

MCMs aren't the only times rules are ignored. Fitness gangs in the Grove blow through stop signs and jam up Bayshore Drive. Just because you *can* use a whole lane doesn't mean you should. Ride single-file or two-by-two at most.

What Miami needs isn't critical mass, but critical manners. Maybe Miami Bike Scene could organize one of those. Everyone would have lights and a helmet, obey signals, signal stops and turns, and most important, be courteous.

Revenge rides don't help. In fact, they make it much more dangerous for people like me.

*Robert Labrie
Edgewater*

That's the Way the Stone Crab Crumbles

Regarding Pamela Brandt's note on the passing of another South Florida landmark, the Crab House ("Dish," July 2013), I, too, am sorry that it closed down, but felt 100 percent validated when I read her further comment: "I doubt that any other crab lover who attempted in recent years the once-famed 'All You Can Eat Seafood Bar' questions the reason for the closing."

My older sister was visiting from Tucson over the first week of May. After several hours of sightseeing, around 3:00 p.m., we started to feel really hungry and I figured she'd enjoy some stone crabs. I hadn't been to the Crab House in ages, but it seemed just the ticket because it was Monday and Joe's was closed.

Whoa, what a disappointment! The crabs were without question "off," and the service was a joke. I ended up complaining and was told I'd be given an extra piece of key lime pie (gee, thanks; that really makes up for the bad stone crabs), which, in the end, didn't happen because the waiter couldn't be found to bring us our bill. I just paid the cashier and left!

It's too bad, but what can you do? I always liked Billy's better anyway!

*Deborah Stander
Belle Meade*

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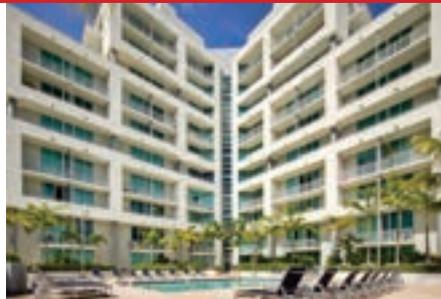
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Rock-a-Hula, Baby!

How we came to make a documentary about America's 20th-century Polynesian obsession. Hint: It involved rum

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

Films take a long time to make, so long, in fact, that a lot of filmmakers get used to their friends never asking them about their work. (Other than maybe to say, "Still working on that... What was it, again?") Maybe they figure we'll just let them know when we actually have something to show. Well, guess what? We've got something.

I'm happy to report that Brett O'Bourke, Jorge Rubiera, and I — collectively, Common Machine Productions — are premiering *Plastic Paradise: A Swingin' Trip Through America's Polynesian Obsession* on WLRN-Channel 17 on Wednesday, September 18 (with additional broadcasts to follow). From there, it'll go national.

It's our first film for PBS in two years (our last was *Hecho a Mano: Creativity in Exile*) and is as ambitious as anything we've done. It chronicles the rise, fall, and resurgence of tiki, or "Polynesian pop," a subculture of hipsters, hula girls, and rum drinks — and it has a backstory that goes to show just how long some projects take.

Flashback: It was 2003 and O'Bourke and I were the editors of *Street*, a stand-alone weekly the *Miami Herald* was trying to breathe some life into. (We managed to do it, but it still folded.) Anyway, we heard about an event that was coming

to Fort Lauderdale, a four-day tiki festival, complete with lounge-style music acts and cocktail-mixing demonstrations.

(To be clear, "tiki" as used here refers to all things Polynesian, and should not be confused with a genre of drinking establishment, popular in the Keys, where tourists go to hear Jimmy Buffett songs.)

The fest, we were told, was called Hukilau, and would be drawing tikiphiles — that's what they called themselves — from as far away as New York and California. We assigned a writer to cover the event, and then decided it sounded like too much fun not to go to the big Saturday night party at the Mai-Kai restaurant ourselves.

For those who've never been to the Mai-Kai, it's the last of the great mid-20th century Polynesian palaces. Opened in 1956, it features dining room after dining room elaborately decorated with Polynesian artifacts, seating for 600, an outdoor garden with waterfalls, and a Polynesian dance revue, reportedly the longest continuously staged show of its type anywhere in the United States.

So we knew we were in for a good time, regardless of how Hukilau might turn out. But nothing could have prepared us for hundreds of people dressed in vintage tiki attire — Hawaiian shirts, sarong-style dresses, grass skirts — swaying to jungle-tinged beats and throwing back rum-loaded cocktails the names of which are no doubt intended to



double as warnings: the Shark Bite, the Shrunken Skull, the Zombie.

After ordering up a couple of rum barrels — not as colorfully christened as some of the other drinks, but just as deadly — O'Bourke and I surveyed the scene and decided a magazine feature could never fully capture what we were witnessing. "Somebody ought to make a movie," I told him at some point. Or he told me. I can't be sure. We were already a couple of barrels into our evening.

The funny thing is that neither of us was a filmmaker then. No matter. Hukilau became an annual thing, we became filmmakers, and we eventually discovered there was a thriving subculture of 20-somethings, 30-somethings, and 40-somethings who had adopted Polynesian pop as a lifestyle. Not just rum drinks and Hawaiian shirts, but Martin Denny records, tiki tattoos, and an obsessive need to seek out any and all mid-century, tiki-influenced architecture and design.

Even more interesting to us was that a lot of these tikiphiles were former punk rockers, too old and burdened with grown-up obligations to be punk anymore, but still craving the sense of community they once shared, and aided by the rise of

the Internet, finding it in tiki.

We pitched it as a documentary to WLRN a few years back. After initially saying no — they hadn't been to Hukilau — they reconsidered. Two years later, *Plastic Paradise* is ready for its unveiling.

Most of it was filmed at Hukilau 2011 in Fort Lauderdale, but we also shot in New York and Los Angeles, where tiki enjoys its firmest foothold. We interviewed mixologists, historians, hula dancers, even a mermaid. (You'll want to meet her.)

We also included the story of tiki's original rise, from the opening of Don the Beachcomber — America's first tiki-themed bar — in Hollywood, California, in 1934, to Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki expedition to the popularity of *South Pacific*, all of which fueled Americans' decades-long fascination with Polynesia, or at least with the image of Polynesia found in the funhouse mirror of our pop culture.

It's the film O'Bourke and I thought somebody should make back in 2003. We just never dreamed it would be us. Maybe it was that second rum barrel that did it.

Aloha.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Letter from the Governor? How Nice...

You never know what's going to be slipped into your mailbox

By Jack King
BT Contributor

A few weeks ago I, a flaming liberal, got a letter from our illustrious cue-ball governor, Rick Scott. I could only think it was a mistake. It was. My wife is a registered Republican, and it was actually addressed to her. I handed it to her. She took one look and immediately tossed it into the trash.

Anything from Rick Scott is always of interest to me, so I fished it out of the wastebasket.

Seems like our esteemed governor wants cash from us to save the Republican Party in Florida from a fate worse than death. He starts out by telling us that "President Obama's reckless agenda is hurting Floridians. I am sick and tired of it."

Wow! Sick and tired of it? How about when the Republicans, under the leadership President George "deer in the headlights" Bush crashed the economy, and his only answer to the mess was to give the White House keys to President Obama and then leave town? What a solution — blame it on the next guy.

He then goes on to say the Republicans lost close races in 2012, including the presidency. Supposedly we need to donate to the state Republican Party to make sure the same thing doesn't happen at the state level. Apparently there's a little marketing disconnect here, but

when it comes to money, Scott's insanity knows no bounds.

He continues to blather about electing rock-solid candidates (Tea Partiers?) "from the Florida State legislature to the U.S. congress, and all the way to the governor's office."

Oh right, he almost forgot. He's running for re-election with a 35-percent approval rating. I must note that Scott's approval rating has been on a slight rise. That's because he's done nothing terribly wrong in the past few months. The reason? Recently he's done exactly nothing. Aren't we lucky!

Scott goes on: "I've been asked to do my part and help with fundraising because as Florida's Governor I see every day how bad President Obama's radical agenda is hurting our state..." You think it's Obama's agenda hurting us? I think if you look around, Guv, you might see that your silly war with Medicare and Medicaid, and your stubbornly stupid fight to not implement federal laws like the Affordable Care Act, actually does serious damage to Floridians, many of whom are 55 and older. Oh, by the way, those Floridians you want to protect from Obama's agenda are also called voters.

Then Scott gets to the real meat of the letter: money. He asks us for generous gifts of \$2500, \$1000, \$500, \$250 or \$100.

The very next paragraph reduces the amounts to \$50, \$35, or \$20. Right after

that the small amounts are eliminated. Just the big money, please. To bring in even more money, Scott should have put in a plug for Marco Rubio's presidential bid.

The Democratic National Committee sent me a fundraising letter and asked me for \$3. I complied. Rather than these tiny amounts, Scott should just ask Bill Koch (the unknown Koch brother) for a few million. He lives in Palm Beach.

I know paper and postage are expensive these days, Mr. Governor, but bringing Charlie Crist into your letter really takes the cake. You say that "\$787 billion in the Obama-Crist 'stimulus' package blew a hole in the annual budget." Please explain to me what Charlie Crist had to do with the federal stimulus program.

Oh wait, now I get it. Isn't that the Charlie Crist who's going to run against you for the governor's seat in 2014?

Rick, I'm sorry to say I won't be sending you a check any time soon. I hope that's okay with you, as I know you could be a little short of cash these days. It was tough for you to pay off that Medicare fraud penalty of \$1.6 billion, and then have to put up more than \$70 million of your



own money to get elected. Gosh, Rick, I don't think Floridians are that stupid.

You're not exactly my type of political

prom date. However, I did find a very incomplete list of people who think otherwise and have donated to your campaign already. They are:

Ron Book \$25,000, Miguel B. Fernandez (healthcare) \$125,000, Donald Trump \$100,000, Progress Energy \$100,000, Blue Cross \$250,000, Wayne Huizenga \$250,000, Manny Medina \$50,000, Genting and Resorts World \$150,000, FPL \$250,000, United States Sugar Corp \$300,000, Florida Crystals (sugar) \$200,000, Stephen Ross (Dolphins) \$50,000. (Thanks to eyeonmiami.blogspot.com for the list.)

Mr. Governor, it seems like you just can't do anything right. Your campaign to bring new businesses to Florida is really pissing off governors in other states. Your "my state is better than your state" campaign led *Boston Magazine* to refer to Florida at "the most bat-shit crazy state in the union."

Only you could top Rick Perry of Texas as the dumbest governor in the United States.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Talking of the Weather... Once More

This transplant finds Florida's climate a topic worth repeating

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

I've been writing this column now for almost two years — some 24 articles and 20,000 words later, and I'm looking back. I started "Urbania" in the fall of 2011 as a loose exploration of the Biscayne Corridor urban living experience, mainly in the Wynwood-Edgewater area.

My relationship with the city and my surroundings at that time spun a richer web than today. I was out in the scene, ear to the ground, connected to the urban experience in a very purposeful way. But by the spring of 2012, I was engaged, approaching 30, and invested in a career as a copywriter.

First, I stopped going out so much. I narrowed my circle of friends, and overhauled my physical lifestyle. No more alcohol or cigarettes. I cooked more and ate well. I made financial maturity goal, and took up exercise and competition as a meaningful part of my life.

After spending most of my 20s with little regard for my health and well-being, living a regular, decent life was a new experience — as was being a regular, decent person. I also had to get new heroes, because mine were all out of their minds.

Most people who create things will put them on a shelf when finished and not revisit them. I'm no exception. After something

is published, I read it once in print to see my editor's changes and then place it in the archive. But today I broke that rule.

I remembered that day a year ago — hot, humid, our rooftops awash in blistering sunshine — when I wrote about the weather. I'd like to share part of that column again to celebrate a summer that has failed to deliver one storm with a name worth remembering:

Like many transplants, I grew up in the north with four full seasons. In the dead of winter, the sun faded to dusk by 4:30 and temperatures could drop below zero. By July, the thermometer hovered in the 90s, and we'd stay out until a late sunset catching fireflies.

But northern weather wore on me with its physical schizophrenia. From clothing to routines, you need more of everything. I knew I'd end up in the sunshine, where you need less. It's simple, cyclical. The few good cold memories I have are of skiing, fall leaves, fireplaces, and the comforting way that distinct seasons slow time. The punishment for living in paradise is that years flip by with cruel speed.

When I arrived here, I went to the beach year round. To me, it was always beautiful outside, the water always perfect. I was an excitable tourist on permanent vacation. What was the difference, anyhow, between 72 and 82? May and November? It took me years to



tune into these subtle shifts and adapt my lifestyle accordingly. More happens down here between January and December than I ever thought possible: mid-60s to low 90s, cool to hot, dry to wet, crisp to humid, clear to buggy, and on it goes. I now have more to mark seasons with than art and music events.

But I've grown spoiled. Now I don't go to the beach unless it's perfect — the sun, air, water, day of the week, and time of day must all align. I've driven home because I can't find a good parking spot on South Beach, and in my head I see myself at age 12 waiting for the bus. It's dark and freezing. The street is covered in filthy snow, and I'm staring incredulously as a man in an air-conditioned car drives away from a white-sand beach because he can't bear to walk two blocks.

These days happen. We curse the heat. We whine about rain. We skip the beach because of clouds. But my worst day in Miami is still pretty good, and I'm always grateful for sunshine. That we live in one of the sunniest places on earth is worth smiling about every day

of the year. I blame the listlessness of my youth on the lack of sunshine in Pennsylvania and England.

Once I heard a radio interviewer ask a Swedish author if her country's endless nights drive more people to suicide. I found her explanation fascinating. She said Scandinavian happiness is renowned, and that Swedes don't commit more suicide — they're just honest about it. Religious guilt causes people in other cultures to lie and cover up suicide, but Swedes, she said, are not ashamed. Scandinavians, with all their cold darkness, have a remarkably happy reputation. Perhaps as a reaction to their surroundings, they simply insist on happiness.

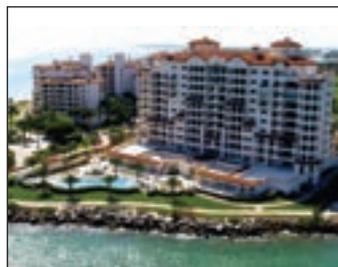
This hurricane season may pass uneventfully, or it may yet bring violent storms that drive us into the streets to help our neighbors. But right now we can be thankful because we know that the story always ends the same; another long and beautiful winter will come to fix whatever went wrong.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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BizBuzz

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

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

This month marks the end of summer and beginning of autumn (on September 22), though it doesn't seem that way everywhere in the USA, according to weather charts. In San Francisco, for instance, the average temperature actually goes *up* in September.

Here in Miami, though, the sun is officially letting up, at least a little bit. And just when it's getting possible to go outdoors without being slathered head-to-toe in SPF 237, our advertisers have come up with many special events, deals, places to go, things to do/buy/eat. .

September's only government-approved three-day-weekend holiday is Labor Day, but at **Temple Israel** (137 NE 19th St., 305-573-5900) the holidays, including Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year, September 2-4) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement, evening of September 13 to evening of September 14), fill this month. There'll be holiday activities for all ages. For a full schedule: templeisrael.net. Happy New Year!

For those seeking not religious but spiritually minded physical renewal, this issue's ad for **Inner Balance** (12579 Biscayne Blvd., 786-383-3088) offers a deal to first-time clients for its yoga, barre, and pilates classes: \$30 for 30 days. But keep reading! In addition, there's a special deal for all you BizBuzz readers: Mention the

BT for \$20 off a ten-pack of group classes.

If you are being driven nuts because you're ending summer with not exactly a bikini body, check out **Orange Theory Fitness** (18839a Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-0544), where you'll not only "feel the burn" during your one-hour workout, but an afterburn for the next 36 hours — during which an extra 200-400 calories melt off. In September, buy a six-month membership and they'll give you one month free.

Get a vigorous workout that'll also teach you to protect yourself on the mean streets at new advertiser **Chi Taekwon-Do** (9617 Park Dr., 786-493-4095). The school, which has more than 20 years' experience in instruction of the traditional Korean martial art (versus the more recently developed branch of taekwondo, which emphasizes sport over culturally and spiritually rooted self-defense), is now accepting new students, ages 5-adult, with all levels of experience. Enroll and get a free uniform plus a private introductory class.

Treat yourself to some new clothes for that improved bod, courtesy of **Frangipani** (2516 NW 2nd Ave., 305-573-1480). The shop actually carries a full range of handmade, sustainable, and fun items, but at a block party on September 7, between 25th and 26th streets, they'll be having a trunk show for Aquarius, a local clothing line designed by Daniella Sredni, and offering 25% off on her pieces. "Yummy snacks, too," adds Frangipani's Jennifer Frehling.



And now that we've transitioned to food, our favorite subject: Welcome to new advertiser **Bay Harbor Bistro** (1023 Kane Concourse, 305-866-0404), whose in-house bakery turns out snacks including the most plumply stuffed empanadas we've ever found in Miami. The Euro-American bistro's other fare ranges from tapas to three squares (full breakfasts, lunches, and dinners). See this issue's new Dining Guide capsule for scrumptious specifics.

Also a new addition to the Dining Guide, as well as new advertiser and newest addition to North Bay Village's dining scene: **Paprika** (1624 79th Street Cswy., 305-397-8777). Exuberantly exotic décor transports diners to somewhere fantastical, as does Moroccan/Tunisian/Middle Eastern food, a hookah lounge, and on Friday nights, belly dancers.

September means Oktoberfest, and so does October, at the **Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus** (1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002). Festivities start with a big party on September 21, when Munich's Oktoberfest begins, but continue well beyond the Bavarian festival's October 3 end, every weekend

till November. Traditional Oktoberfest beers and skilletts will be served, and anyone wearing a dirndl or lederhosen gets a free beer from friendly host Alex Richter.

Celebrate NYC's 87th annual San Gennaro Feast in Miami at **Laurenzo's Italian Market** (16445 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-944-5052), with an in-store mini festival September 20-22. Highlights, according to David Laurenzo, will include a hand-carved statue of the saint in the market's café, "authentic festa music Italiani," and traditional street foods like sausage and peppers, Italian ices, and fried zepoles. Giveaways and wine specials, too.

Been to **Fish Fish** (13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124) yet? Many Miamians haven't, owing to this extraordinary seafood market/restolounge's unlikely location in the corner of an otherwise ordinary strip mall. But there couldn't be a better time to discover this source of impeccably fresh fish/shellfish than its belated but truly grand Grand Opening, September 21, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., featuring cooking

Continued on page 24

Robbie Bell
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William Harbour 786 247 1185



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William Harbour 786 247 1185



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BizBuzz

Continued from page 22

demos, tastings, and a farmers market. Part of the proceeds benefit the educational gardening and healthy cooking programs of community-based Once Upon a Carrot.

And neighborhood favorite **Piccolo Pizza** (2104 NE 123rd St., 305-893-9550) brings back a favorite special this month: Buy any large-topping pizza, and get a medium cheese pizza free.

Work off all that food with our favorite exercise — shopping — starting at new advertiser **Aventura Mattress** (18340 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-682-8895), a company that not only sells quality mattresses and box springs but will set up your new bed, cart away the old one, and more. See this issue's ad for special offers. If you're serious about exercise, just decline the perks like free delivery and schlep the bed yourself.

Roadtrip! New advertiser **Mei Kitchens** (2150 NW 33rd St., Pompano Beach, 954-970-4156), which revolutionized the contemporary kitchen and bath cabinet industry with its own patented "stiles-and-rails" technology, is currently celebrating its ten-year anniversary with a sale: 20% off and guaranteed two-week shipping on five popular styles. For browsing without driving, go to www.MeiKitchens.com.

Those looking for bedroom furniture that serves as the artistic focal point of its space, as well as being flexible and practical in design, will want to view the new Skyline bedroom from Nolte at **The Collection German Furniture** (15400 Biscayne Blvd. #112, 305-944-3727). The modular furnishing system can be freely combined for a broad scope of functions, shapes, and design concepts, and dimensions. It suits any space. With a variety of elegant, high-gloss finishes, including lacquered cream, and optional integrated LED lighting that changes color at the push of a button, it's also gorgeous.

Contemporary furniture items from across the globe, including Italian leather and European-design pieces, are the specialty at new advertiser **Antonini Modern Living** (3201 N. Miami Ave., 786-422-8800). Keep your eyes open for details and deals regarding the store's official Grand Opening, slated for the end of October, but it has actually been open for business since May, and normal prices are quite affordable.

If what you're looking to purchase is not furnishings but something to furnish, consider **The Crimson** (601 NE 27th St., 305-377-3337, a glam and environmentally conscious (LEED silver), 90-unit

waterfront condo. The project, offering spectacular, water-view, one- to three-bedroom residences and townhouses, was created by Mckafka Development Group, which just this month announced a new partnership with ISG World; this fully integrated luxe realty firm is now The Crimson's exclusive sales company.

For potential buyers particularly interested in the Upper Eastside, welcome new advertiser **Imburgia Realty** (www.ImburgiaRealty.com), a third-generation, family-owned real estate company based in Miami Shores, where mother/daughter team Cathy Imburgia and Cristina Imburgia Butler live as well as work. For 13 years previously, mom Cathy worked as a bank VP, focusing on business development and personal banking, which assists client relationships in real estate; Cristina worked for the family construction company, Imburgia Construction (in business since 1976, and run by dad Lou, a former Miami Shores mayor). They definitely know the area. And you'll feel especially good in your new property knowing that a percentage of the team's proceeds goes to Cristina's nonprofit dog rescue, A Way For a Stray. Give the team a call at 786-566-1903 (Cathy) or 305-970-9419 (Cristina).

A different kind of pet rescue, for your own dogs or cats, is offered this month by a unique new business, and new advertiser, **Cool Pawz** (www.CoolPawz.com or 305-834-9598): a 100% safe and nontoxic barrier wax that protects paws from hot pavement, sharp objects, gravel, etc. It also prevents careening pets from slipping on tile or hardwood floors, protecting your furniture, vases, and other possessions from breakage. It's \$9.95 per jar, and 10% of proceeds are donated to a pet adoption center.

And at **Smiling Pets** (7310 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-0844), a full-service animal hospital for both emergencies and the less urgent medical and dental needs of your four-legged family members, Dr. Avi Adulami is offering a 15% discount this month to all new clients mentioning the *BT*. And he adds news: "Smiling Pets is now a Green company."

Two-legged family members needing medical or dental care will want to join us in welcoming new advertiser **Leung Healthcare**, owned and operated by Dr. Gilbert Leung and wife Theresa. This family affair includes medical offices in North Miami (305-899-1406), North Miami Beach (305-944-9388), and Hollywood (954-921-5553). They offer a

Continued on page 25

first-rate dental practice, also in North Miami Beach (305-760-2950). See their ad in this issue for locations and hours, plus a long list of services and insurance options.

And a heartfelt welcome back to returning advertiser **Medi-Station Urgent Care Center** (9600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-603-7650), which provides walk-in medical services (including emergencies) for all ages, with less wait time and lower cost than a hospital ER. From colds and flu, wounds, burns, fractures or sprains, rashes, and migraines to non-urgent but necessary stuff like school and sport physicals, Dr. Carlos Sanchez and his staff deal with them all — seven days a week.

Senior citizens often need various other sorts of care that are not medically related, but greatly facilitate their daily lives: personal assistant services specifically geared toward the elderly. That's what's offered by new advertiser **Happily Ever Elder** (www.happilyeverelder.com, 786-348-0712), which is decidedly *not* a daycare facility. Owner Stephanie Anderson personally provides a full range of services, including errand-running, cooking, local transportation, exercise, domestic help (laundry, "spring cleaning," bill-paying), simple companionship, and more — with respect, and in your own home.

A progress report on the makeover of iconic **Biscayne Plaza** (Biscayne Boulevard and NE 79th Street) from new owners Global Realty and Management: Painting of the façade of dd's Discounts and adjoining shops is under way, and the Biscayne Shops are completely renovated and ready for new tenants. All current tenants are staying on (though moving to different spaces). To discuss joining them, call leasing director Randy Tulepan at 954-290-8159.

There's always something new to do, buy, or eat at the **Shops at Midtown Miami** (3401 N. Miami Ave.). In fact, as a longtime Edgewater resident, it's hard to remember what we did before Midtown Miami existed. Here's what's going on this month: Vision Works, offering designer eyewear at great prices as well as eye exams, is now open; and Pinkberry, the popular, original tart froyo shop, is scheduled to open on September 27. Further, in preparation for October 19's pre-Halloween South Florida Zombie Crawl, the walking dead and their fans can vote on their favorite Crawl T-shirt design till September 13. For info contact the Shops' general manager, Lenor Ryan, at 305-573-3371 or lryan@ddr.com.

With luck, this month's *BT* has arrived in time for you to hurry over to September 4's Wine Down Wednesday at **HistoryMiami** (101 Flagler St., 305-375-1492). The fun cultural meet-and-greet features a preview of the

museum's upcoming "Bob Marley, Messenger" exhibit. If you miss the preview, though, no worries. The exhibition, minus the beverage component, runs October 11- January 5. Curated by the Grammy Museum at L.A. Live, the show includes a special supplement highlighting Marley's impact on South Floridians. Check back later this month for info on dates for live, program-related activities (like a planned Jamaican-themed family festival featuring Marley's daughter Cedella, a children's book author). We'll also tell you about them next issue.

Looking ahead at things you can expect next month, the Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce announces its fab and fun street festival **Miami Shores Green Day** on October 26, 3:00-8:00 p.m. The unique fair and marketplace will close off NE 2nd Avenue and celebrate the goodness of greenness with music, organic food/drink, and eco-friendly vendors, and demonstrations. To register your business for participation, go to www.miamishores.com/greenday. September 16 is the deadline for inclusion in the print program.

Even farther ahead is Miami-Dade College's **Writers Institute**, November 20-22 at The Center @ MDC (401 NE 2nd Ave. #4102; 305-237-3940) — three days of intensive workshops on fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and publishing, plus manuscript consultations with agents. But because most workshops at the much-respected Institute are limited to 15 people, it's wise to register ASAP, rather than to procrastinate. (Procrastination comes later, when you're a professional writer on deadline.) For more info and registration, go to www.flcenterlitarts.com/.

And farther still: Now that summer vacation is over, how about a winter staycation? Enter the **City of Miami Beach Plugged In contest**, to win a luxe, carefree beach weekend. We're talking deluxe hotel suite, meals, drinks, tours, concert/movie tix, museum admission, and even parking. To enter go to MBCulture.com, or text Pluggedin to 91011, by November 30.

Finally, you've doubtless noticed numerous ads for political candidates running in November 5's Miami general election. It wouldn't be appropriate to tell you, in this column, who to vote for. But we do urge you to familiarize yourself with the candidates' positions on issues by reading their ads in this issue. Some are quite detailed in themselves, and include websites for more info.

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

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Life in the Rail World

I wanted to be carried away by the clickety-clack romance of steel wheels, and sway along the rails from Miami to Orlando, brimming with nostalgia. I wanted to watch wild palms and citrus groves unfurl outside big windows while I reflected on life, as travelers often do.

I had read reviews online before buying my ticket. People raved. They said they'd choose Amtrak any day over driving or flying to Orlando, or even to New York City, even if it meant a longer

trip. So, along with my childish fascination with choo-choos, I set out on a recent summer morning with high expectations.

I see now that the effusiveness with which some people speak of Amtrak isn't a reflection of quality. It's simply the excitement of people unaccustomed to rail travel, elated to avoid traffic and airports.

Trains, whiskey, and guns form a holy trinity in American folklore, but only the last two still hold a prominent place in American culture. And as I made my way north on the rails,

eavesdropping and chatting with affable oddballs, I found myself wondering how South Florida, and most of the United States (once the greatest railroad nation in the world), ended up with a neglected, unreliable, underfunded, and largely forgotten passenger rail network.

I wondered, too, about All Aboard Florida, the new passenger rail service that will connect Miami and Orlando starting in 2015. All Aboard Florida promises to do what Amtrak can't — run very fast hourly trains on time, with great

amenities, from beautifully designed, centrally located stations. If successful, it will be the only privately funded passenger rail line in the United States.

Will anyone ride it? Will All Aboard Florida make a profit? Or is it, as some skeptics suggest, a sophisticated financial scheme hatched by New York investment bankers to take billions of dollars and benefits from federal and local governments?

Moreover, how would the success of a private passenger train reflect on



Cover photo by Silvia Ros. Photo above by Terence Cantarella

All Aboard Florida's grand scheme: Run fast, run on time, offer comfort and amenities, then, perhaps, cash out

By Terence Cantarella

Amtrak, with its large government subsidies and unreliable service? Would Amtrak be able to survive?

Miami, along with Congress and the U.S. railroad industry, is waiting to find out.

I drove through Liberty City and Brownsville. I passed housing projects, abandoned buildings, warehouses, garages, and truck depots until I found the Miami Amtrak station next to an electrical yard, in an industrial strip sandwiched between West Little River

and Hialeah. Unreachable on foot from anywhere popular with pedestrians, the building at 8303 NW 37th Ave. is the antithesis of everything the rest of the world imagines when they think of big-city train stations.

There's no grand hall or marble floor, no food or retail, no easy transit connections, no architectural flourishes. It's just an oversized *Amshack* (the derisive name given to the drab, prefabricated stations erected across the country in the 1970s).

Still, there's much to admire. At \$42 for a one-way ticket to Orlando — with specials as low as \$31.50 — the prices are unbeatable. And what Amtrak lacks in style, it makes up for in simplicity.

The mob of traffic and harried airport herds that have marred so many of my journeys were nowhere in sight the morning I arrived (on a purely fact-finding mission for this story). I parked my car free of charge, walked 50 feet and was just steps from the waiting train. No lines. No security. No stress. It was so

easy, I felt giddy.

Inside the station, there was just a smattering of passengers. I took a Miami-Dade County transportation map off a rack and flipped through it. Amtrak wasn't even mentioned. I felt like I was in on a secret.

My train, the Silver Meteor, was scheduled to leave at 8:20 a.m. and arrive in Orlando five hours later (it would actually take six). A second train, the Silver

.....
Continued on page 28

Rail World

Continued from page 27

Star, leaves at 11:50 and takes more than seven hours to get to Orlando because it goes to Tampa first. Both trains continue on to New York City, stopping in cities and towns along the way.

On the platform, I showed my e-ticket to an employee in blue jeans and a T-shirt, and boarded the last car. I checked for WiFi (an essential amenity promised by All Aboard Florida), but there was none. Some Amtrak trains in popular corridors offer it, but it's often derided as "Why-Try," owing to its unreliability.

A shout bellowed down the platform, "All Aboard!" And we were off.

Out of some 100 seats in my car, only six were taken: a redheaded college-age girl, a dreadlocked androgynous figure in basketball clothes, and a Spanish-speaking couple with two young children.

The scenery initially was predictably glum: warehouses, junk yards, trailer parks, and small private yards strewn with laundry, furniture, and toys. We eventually cozied up to I-95 and paralleled it all the way to West Palm Beach,



Miami's Amtrak station: No grand hall, no food, no retail, no transit connections — an Amshack.

BT photo by Silvia Ros

reaching a top speed of 77 mph (according to my iPhone speedometer app). Exceeding 79 mph is illegal without Positive Train Control (PTC), an expensive braking technology that stops a train if the engineer doesn't comply with signals. Most Amtrak trains don't have PTC. All Aboard Florida trains will.

At the five stops along the I-95 corridor (Hollywood, Fort Lauderdale, Deerfield, Delray, and West Palm), my car gained just 17 new passengers. After West Palm, we stopped and lingered for a long time. There was no announcement about the delay.

The basketball figure called out to me from across the aisle in a female voice.

"You speak English?"

I nodded.

"Can I use your phone real quick?"

I couldn't think of a decent excuse, so I handed it over. She turned away and talked inaudibly for a few minutes, then handed the phone back. "Cool," she said.

A woman with matted blonde hair and dirty clothes wandered into the car. She was mumbling and cursing quietly at someone only she could see. A few minutes later she drifted out and continued

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to go back and forth for the rest of the trip. The other passengers napped or quietly played with their electronics.

In Miami, where every sleek, new mega-development leaves me feeling more alienated from the city, it's nice to know there's still a folksy, unpretentious entity like Amtrak.

There was a time when American life revolved around trains. For more than a century, from before the Civil War until after World War II, nearly every long journey on land began and ended on a railway platform. From the romantic steam engines of the Gilded Age to the stainless-steel streamliners of the mid-Twentieth Century, trains were fixtures in everyday life. They captured imaginations and came to represent freedom, opportunity, and progress. Wherever the railroad went, new settlements, new industry, and a new way of life followed.

South Florida, more than any other part of the country, owes its very existence to the railroad. The Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), which runs along the coast from Jacksonville to Miami



BT photo by Terence Cantarella

Traveling through Old Florida: dirt roads, lakes with swings, cows under oaks, Confederate flags.

— and until 1935, to Key West — transformed the once inaccessible southern peninsula into a booming tri-county megalopolis. And the man who laid the tracks in the late 1800s, oil and hotel magnate Henry Flagler, earned himself the illustrious title “Father of Miami” for

bringing the city to life and shaping an entire region with his ribbons of steel.

But despite 116 years of active service, which continues to this day, FEC hasn't run a passenger train on its rails since 1968. What was once known as “America's Speedway to Sunshine” now

carries nothing but freight. A violent strike by the United Transportation Workers prompted FEC officials to discontinue passenger service, which had already become difficult and unprofitable to operate under intense government regulations and growing competition from airlines and automobiles.

A similar tale played out across the nation. Railroads struggled to survive under the burden of their money-losing passenger trains. To save the industry from collapse, the federal government created Amtrak in 1971. President Richard Nixon, and his fiscally conservative supporters, initially wanted to let the railroads fail.

Eventually, a compromise was reached in Congress. The railroads were allowed to abandon passenger service (which they had previously been mandated to maintain) if they helped capitalize Amtrak and donate passenger equipment. More important, the railroads agreed to let the government-run trains use their tracks and infrastructure, for a fee.

Continued on page 30



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 Mon 9am to 7pm, Tues-Fri 9am to 6pm

Rail World

Continued from page 29

In an effort to control the costs of this new venture, Amtrak consolidated more than half the nation's passenger trains, retaining only the most essential corridors. In South Florida, the trains, ideally, would have run along the coastal FEC corridor. After all, those tracks pass through the downtowns of Florida's major cities and towns. But FEC wasn't included in the negotiations, according to FEC historian Seth Bramson, because it had already stopped passenger service after the workers' strike.

That's how Amtrak ended up where it is today, running on separate tracks too far west of city centers along Florida's east coast to be convenient. Back then, the rail corridor was owned by the Seaboard Coast Line. Today CSX owns the corridor from Washington, D.C., to West Palm. And from West Palm to Miami, it belongs to the Florida Department of Transportation.

Since its tumultuous birth, Amtrak has had a hard life. Operating on infrastructure owned by private railroads has meant sharing tracks with freight trains. Freight dispatchers are supposed to give



Miami's Florida East Coast Railway station, which stood for more than 50 years, was demolished in 1963.

passenger trains preference, but that doesn't always happen. Track maintenance, traffic, stalled trains, and other freight company affairs have resulted in Amtrak's unreliable schedules.

At age 42, Amtrak is young in railroad years, but still living on federal

subsidies. The government, you see, thought that a slimmed-down passenger system would eventually become self-sustaining, or better yet, profitable. That never happened. Amtrak requires about \$1 billion a year in federal subsidies, despite ever-increasing ridership,

Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami

and Congress battles annually over its funding.

According to a Brookings study released this year, Amtrak service makes money on its short hauls, but not on the long-distance runs. Those short runs serve 83 percent of its ridership, while the longer runs "contributed an outsized negative share, \$614 million, to Amtrak's balance sheet." While Amtrak's ridership is at record levels, one of Brookings's recommendations was for Amtrak to negotiate with the states to share operating costs and responsibilities. "Now is the time for policymakers and state leaders to better understand the location dynamics of Amtrak so that they can make pragmatic decisions going forward," wrote the authors.

The reliance on taxpayer money has led fiscal conservatives to push for cuts to the agency, if not an end to the agency. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) refers to Amtrak as our "Soviet-style rail system." Ronald Reagan tried to defund it in 1985. So did George W. Bush in 2006. George

Continued on page 32

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THE CRIMSON
WATERFRONT RESIDENCES

Rail World

Continued from page 30

H.W. Bush, Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, and John McCain have been just a few of Amtrak's high-profile enemies.

The liberal response is to point out that no public transportation is self-sustaining. Aviation, highways, and local mass transit systems are all heavily, if not completely, subsidized. Furthermore, no passenger railroad in the world operates without public funding.

But to be fair, Amtrak doesn't exactly move a large number of passengers, only about 31 million annually. Britain's National Rail does that in just over a week.

The Silver Meteor, which took me to Orlando, averages just over a thousand passengers a day between New York and Miami. And, with the exception of popular corridors in the Northeast and California, rail travel is mostly an anomaly. Most people under 40, in fact, have never even ridden a long-distance train.

I walked three cars ahead to the lounge car, hoping to chat with my fellow passengers. I knew from research



The northern end of All Aboard Florida's proposed downtown development (train station not shown).

that Amtrak offers "communal dining." Oddly, I found no one in the lounge who looked obviously communist. I thought, at the very least, I'd end up sipping cappuccino with a bunch of Europhilic weenies in Che Guevara T-shirts.

Instead I found two forlorn-looking, middle-age men sharing a table and

sipping from beer cans. One wore a tank top. The other, a Hawaiian shirt. They were engaged in two of our beloved national pastimes: complaining about prices and accusing someone else of incompetence.

"That guy should be over here cleaning tables," one said, gesturing to the

Courtesy of FECI

lounge car attendant, who was on break and drinking coffee at a corner table.

A sign on the snack bar said, "Back in Half an Hour." It was 10:30 a.m.

"Yeah," the second one said, "especially when I'm paying five-fifty for a Budweiser. Pretty steep, if you ask me."

"It's a lot of money," the first man agreed.

I slid into one of the bench seats and became a lounge lizard, i.e., someone who sits in the lounge car for way too long, watching people come and go, and awkwardly trying to strike up conversations.

A mustachioed Archie Bunker type told me he loves the train and rides it whenever he can, especially since he gets a senior discount. "I have trouble negotiating airports," he added. "This is a slower pace."

A bespectacled grandmother in a sailboat-print blouse was playing cards with her two young grandchildren. She doesn't drive anymore, she said, and was returning to DeLand after taking the grandkids to visit their cousins in Miami.

Continued on page 34

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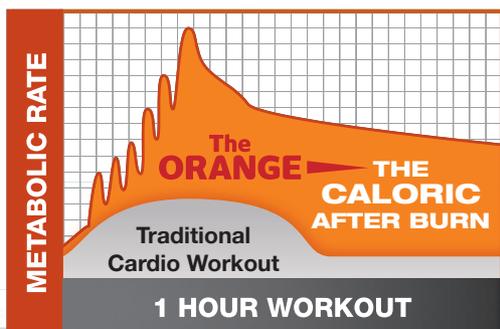
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Rail World

Continued from page 32

An African-American woman with a beatific smile was on her way to Sanford to visit her grandkids, too. It was her first time on Amtrak. "I just love the train," she beamed.

Yet another elderly lady, a New Yorker in every way possible, said she was going home to Brooklyn to "keep an eye on" her husband. Ever since they'd retired, he "gets up to no good" when she leaves town. She used to ride the train to Florida as a girl. Now she takes it because she's scared to fly.

A young guy with hangover eyes and black stud earrings slipped into the seat across from me. He wore a white button-down dress shirt and sweatpants, introduced himself, then launched into a story. He'd had a long, crazy night in Wynwood and had fallen off his bicycle and lost his phone. He needed to borrow mine to log on to Facebook and let his friends know he was on a train headed north. He must have partied pretty hard, I thought, to have lost both his phone and his pants. (But who hasn't done that?)

I tried, once again, to come up with an excuse not to give my phone to a stranger, then handed it over.

"Have you ridden this train before?" I asked, as he typed.

"Uh-huh."

"Is it always this empty?"

He nodded. "People prefer to drive."

"What about you?"

"I only have my bike."

And then it hit me. Many of the people on this train weren't here because it was better than their other options. They were here because it was their *only* option. They didn't own cars, no longer drove, refused to fly, or couldn't afford airfare.

In South Florida, I realized, Amtrak is basically a public bus on rails.

Have you seen the plans for these new All Aboard Florida trains? They'll have WiFi, gourmet meals, comfy seats, and level boarding (no stairs, like on local Amtrak trains).



Map by Marcy Mock

From Miami to Orlando in three hours, up to 125 mph, and with amenities from WiFi to gourmet meals.

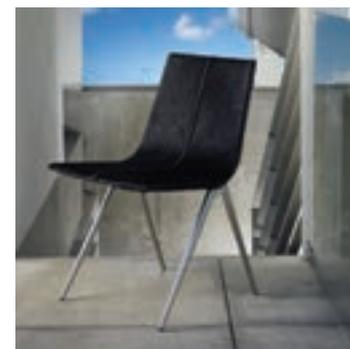
An advanced baggage-check system means passengers won't have to carry luggage to the platform, as they do with Amtrak.

And unlike many Amtrak trains, All Aboard Florida will connect to local transit in the four cities where it stops: Metrorail, Metromover, and (eventually) Tri-Rail in Miami; the future Wave Streetcar in Fort Lauderdale; trolleys in West Palm Beach; and the various systems at Orlando International Airport's northern terminus.

But the real draw will be speed and frequency. The plan is to run a train every hour on the hour from about 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Travel time is projected to take just three hours. Private tracks, few stops, and the ability to reach 125 mph in some areas will make that brisk travel time possible, we're assured.

Don't let the unimaginative name fool you. All Aboard Florida has lobbyists, political clout, public support, and a spiffy orange-striped design. It's even headed by one of the railroad industry's most

Continued on page 36



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Actual Unit View

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Actual Unit View

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

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"Thanks Jeff & Randy"

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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.

Rail World

Continued from page 34

successful figures, Gene Skoropowski, and by former Disney executives P. Michael Reininger and Donald Robinson.

In an interview with *Metro Center Outlook*, a public affairs program on PBS, Robinson called the passenger service “a three-hour attraction.”

How much will a trip between Miami and Orlando cost on this streamlined baby?

José Gonzalez, executive vice president of corporate development for Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), which serves as a holding company for All Aboard Florida, says, “The cheapest [airline] ticket you’ll find is about \$78 one way. And so we need to beat that. So, typically, it’ll be under that price.” First-class service, he notes, will cost more.

Speaking of first-class, the plans for the Miami station sound downright opulent. It’ll be downtown, next to Government Center, where the legendary Florida East Coast Railway passenger station stood for more than half a century. That station was torn down in 1963, leaving an empty lot now used for parking.



BT photo by Terence Cantarella

Built in 1926, Orlando’s station is magnificent — stately towers, shady arcade, cobblestone parking lot.

The new station will be the largest of three planned for All Aboard Florida — a 60,000-square-foot, “light-filled,” Grand Central-style affair with elevated tracks that will offer passengers “a panoramic entry into the city,” according to company reports. There are plans for stores, restaurants, offices, and an apartment tower.

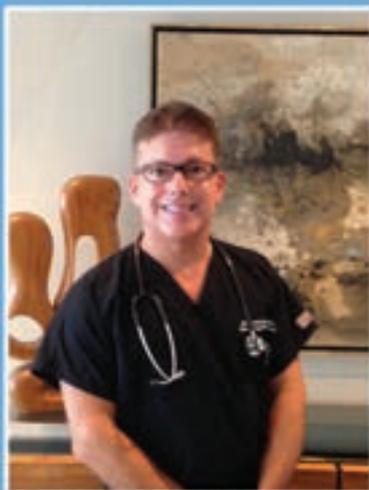
Behind all this extravagance is a complicated structure of corporate ownership. But it’s worth explaining because within that structure, skeptics have found reason to question the motives behind the massive investment, and whether in the long run, Floridians will end up paying for it after all.

The All Aboard Florida project is actually overseen by two companies: All Aboard Florida — Operations LLC and All Aboard Florida — Stations LLC. The former owns the easement right to develop and operate passenger rail service in the existing rail corridor. The latter owns much of the land for the stations in downtown Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach.

Both companies are wholly owned subsidiaries of Coral Gables-based Florida East Coast Industries (FECI). In turn, FECI, along with the Florida East Coast Railway LLC (FEC), is owned by “investment equity funds managed by affiliates of Fortress Investment Group LLC,” according to the AAF website. (Fortress Investment Group is a large New York City investment-management firm, the first hedge fund in the U.S. to trade publicly.)

Translation: The various components of the business are separate legal entities. Besides tax benefits and regulatory and creditor protections, the structure also helps facilitate the potential sale of one

Continued on page 38



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BT photo by Terence Cantarella

Orlando station: Old wooden benches, terracotta tiles, graceful arches, and toilets that wouldn't flush.

Rail World

Continued from page 36

component of the company.

And the likelihood of a sale is exactly what skeptics like Gilbert B. Norman are warning against. Norman is a retired Chicago CPA and former senior internal auditor at the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad. He writes about "news, analysis, and commentary on passenger trains and train travel in the United States" at ridingmytrain.blogspot.com. "Quite simply," he states, "there will never be a passenger train operating over the Florida East Coast Railway for their own account."

Norman believes that All Aboard Florida was created by Fortress Investment Group to, shall we say, entice the state to buy the FEC rail corridor, which Fortress owns.

"[All Aboard Florida] simply generates public visibility," he writes, "so that when the private equity concern that owns FEC approaches a public agency, such as the state, to buy the [corridor], all this public excitement about passenger trains will translate to voters saying, 'buy it' (or we'll find someone else to vote for). ...All Aboard Florida is a ploy; enjoy the fun and dreaming while it lasts."

Before All Aboard Florida is developed, Norman predicts during a recent telephone interview, Fortress Investment Group will approach the state about buying the corridor. He believes the state wants it in order to allow other freight railways to serve South Florida's ports,

which are currently only served by the FEC. That, he says, would create competitive pricing and attract more shippers.

Just as important, he says, the state would want to prevent CSX or Norfolk Southern from buying the corridor from FEC. Since those two railroads collectively serve every major port along the East Coast north of Florida, they would have no incentive to provide good service or competitive pricing at Florida ports — thus jeopardizing the massive investments the state recently made at PortMiami and Port Everglades.

If the state buys the rail corridor, Norman believes, All Aboard Florida would disappear soon after. And when the public demands passenger trains from the state? "Wiggle, wiggle, waggle, waggle," Norman says. "They're coming, they're coming, they're coming."

Other online railroad observers predict that All Aboard Florida will begin operations, but that soon after will announce that it can no longer afford to run the service. The state, seeing it as a public good that reduces highway congestion, creates jobs, and delivers economic benefits, will feel pressure to buy the operations component of the business. Fortress will pocket an exorbitant sum from the sale while continuing to charge the state to use the corridor and rake in millions from the bustling new train stations.

Some railroad forums and transportation reporters also suggest that All Aboard Florida is simply a way to open

Continued on page 40

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BT photo by Terence Cantarella

A \$50 room was good enough: unappealing décor, a clogged shower, and a view of a concrete pillar.

Rail World

Continued from page 38

up central Florida to FEC freight trains, which currently don't go there.

Earlier this year, All Aboard Florida obtained permission from the state to lay 40 miles of new track from Cocoa to Orlando International Airport, mostly along the Beachline Expressway. The state bought a 200-foot-wide, 22-mile-long swath of land along the expressway from private landowner Deseret Ranch to lease to the railway. AAF will pay the state \$275,000 a year for use of the land. That fee, however, is a barely a dent in what the FEC could expect to make hauling freight along the same line. And although the lease agreement currently precludes running freight trains, that could change.

The Beachline lease agreement, in fact, already stipulates that the tracks "shall be designed and constructed by AAF with sufficient load bearing and grade characteristics to accommodate future freight movement."

An All Aboard Florida spokeswoman didn't respond by press time to a request for comment on the suspicions expressed by reporters and railroad bloggers.

Last year, however, at a gathering of the Florida East Coast Railway Society, a volunteer and hobbyist group, FECI vice president José Gonzalez was asked about the possibility of freight trains using the line. "There may be opportunities in the future," he said, "but passenger [rail] will come first, and then

[FEC] will dictate how their business will work."

Speaking before the group, Gonzalez touted All Aboard Florida's business model, citing a ridership study his company commissioned: "About 50 million people actually cross [the Miami-Orlando] corridor today. And 95 percent of them are doing it by car." Orlando, he said, is the most-visited city in the country, with 52 million annual visitors. Miami-Dade is the seventh most populous county in the country. Those numbers, he concluded, show the huge ridership potential.

Ironically, it was the government's earlier studies that first alerted his company to that potential of a privately funded rail line.

In 2011, Governor Rick Scott famously rejected \$2.4 billion in federal stimulus funds intended to help the state build a high-speed rail line between Tampa and Orlando, and eventually Miami. At the time, he cited concerns over low ridership and taxpayer cost, even though several studies for that "bullet train," which had been in the planning stage for decades, projected strong ridership. A post-rejection FDOT study concluded that it would have carried 3.3 million passengers a year and operated at a \$10 million surplus.

"When we saw some of those numbers after the governor killed those efforts," Gonzalez explained, "we said, there may be a viable business model here."

FECI, however, may have been quietly eyeing a return to passenger rail even before that.

In 2004, Florida East Coast Railway was one of the top-20 contributors to the “Derail the Bullet Train” initiative, contributing \$25,000 to the political action committee. Other big donors included Enterprise, Ryder, a Sarasota Ford dealership, among others.

Florida East Coast Railway vice president Bob Ledoux didn’t respond to an e-mail message requesting information on this part of company history, but if FEC was positioning itself for passenger rail nearly a decade ago, it might explain All Aboard Florida’s ambitious plans today.

The passenger venture was announced in early 2012. Trains would begin running, the company said, in 2014. That two-year timeline has been extended to almost four, with service now slated for the end of 2015. Considering that construction hasn’t yet begun on the new tracks or stations, however, it still appears to be an optimistic forecast.

Although, when the federal government isn’t involved in funding transportation projects, work apparently progresses at breakneck speed. The Federal Railroad Administration’s environmental approval process, for example, typically takes five to ten years. All Aboard Florida completed the process for the southern section of its route in four months. The rest of the route is now going through the process.

“We’re not asking for any public grants or operating subsidies,” Gonzalez explained to the Florida East Coast Railway Society, “which allows us to move much quicker. Because any time the government steps in to give you money, that’s when everything breaks down. It takes decades.”

All Aboard Florida did, however, apply for a federal loan earlier this year. A company spokeswoman wouldn’t disclose the amount of the request. But according to FedBizOpps.gov, a government website that posts federal government procurement opportunities, the company asked for \$632 million to pay for infrastructure improvements within the FEC corridor between Miami and West Palm Beach. It was the largest amount requested by a railroad in more than a decade. All Aboard Florida, the site says, intends to pursue a separate federal loan application for the rest of the corridor at a later date.

Local governments, meanwhile, are chipping in, too. Aside from the land along the Beachline Expressway, which the state bought to lease to All Aboard Florida, counties are looking at ways to connect their local transit systems with the new trains.

Amtrak may be a fiscal conservative’s worst nightmare, but All Aboard Florida is not averse to sticking its hands into the public pot.

You might say it’s more of a public-private endeavor.

My own personal endeavor, meanwhile, brightened up when the lounge car attendant returned to work at 11:00 a.m. Finally, breakfast!

People rushed the counter. Hamburgers in plastic wrappers were thrown in a microwave. Muffins, Snickers, and trail mix packets flew off the shelves. I opted for a yogurt parfait, which was delicious. The coffee, not so much.

The train was heading inland, away from the crowded coastal corridor. There were the orange groves and wild palms I’d hoped for. There was Old Florida, with its small stucco buildings, dirt roads, lakes with rope swings, cows lolling under oak trees, and Confederate flags flitting from porches.

Three hours later — after Sebring, Winter Haven, Kissimmee, and a few unexplained stops — we arrived in Orlando at 2:30 p.m., an hour late.

Built by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1926, the Orlando station is magnificent, a stuccoed, whitewashed gem with two Spanish church-like towers, a shady arcade, Mediterranean-style arches, and a red-tile roof. Inside there are old wooden benches and terracotta tiles. Outside, a cobblestone parking lot.

Through mergers, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad became the Seaboard Coast Line and, eventually, CSX Transportation, which leases the building to Amtrak. The last renovation was in 1990. Cracks in the stucco give it a well-worn feel but suggest it might be time for more work. The lack of running water in the bathrooms, the inability to flush the toilets, and the dry water fountain are more problematic. The relatively civilized state of the bathrooms, however, suggests that it might have been a temporary glitch.

Continued on page 42

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BT photo by Terence Cantarella

The lounge car provided an opportunity for lingering, eavesdropping, and chatting with affable oddballs.

Rail World

Continued from page 41

To get to Disney World, I had three choices: take one of the two cabs parked out front for about \$50 (\$8 more than the train fare from Miami); take the bus (a nearly two-hour ordeal with transfer and wait time); or approach the little, movable Hertz podium in the corner and rent one of its five available cars.

But I wasn't going to Disney. I was headed to a \$50-a-night downtown hotel with a two-star review on Yelp. I would've walked the four miles, but my cell phone map made it look impossible without negotiating major interchanges. I was further discouraged when I stepped outside the station and found myself in a neighborhood of large, boxy medical buildings. There were no pedestrians anywhere.

I took a cab for \$10.

"How much you pay for hotel?" the Haitian driver asked.

"Fifty."

He shook his head. "Too much. I take you now to good place. Only \$35."

I wanted to say yes but was afraid my hotel would charge me a cancellation fee. I also suspected I might end up on a cot in someone's garage.

My \$50 room was good enough: tiny with unappealing décor, a clogged shower, and a view of a concrete pillar. I walked to Orange Avenue, where the bars are, ate a burrito, drank too much beer, then returned to my shabby den

and fell asleep to the sound of distant train horns.

“We are just now entering a new Golden Age of Rail Travel,” according to America's self-proclaimed “foremost passenger rail policy institute,” United Rail Passenger Alliance. “Not for over half of a century have so many opportunities for good, reliable passenger train service been available.”

Nowhere is that more apparent than in South Florida. While All Aboard Florida may have the most ribbon-cutting appeal, other rail projects are in the works.

Tri-Rail, South Florida's only commuter train system, has been shuttling passengers between Miami and West Palm Beach since 1989. In recent years, it has broken ridership records, operating 50 trains a day on weekdays and 16 on weekends. But those trains run on the same FDOT-owned tracks that Amtrak uses, and are several miles west of South Florida's city centers, making it difficult to access without a car or bus connection.

Since 2006, however, FDOT has been working toward adding Tri-Rail commuter trains to the coastal FEC corridor, where All Aboard Florida will operate. The trains would originate in downtown Miami and make 28 stops, mostly in city centers, on their way to Jupiter. Additionally, an agency spokesman says, FDOT recently applied for federal grants to help fund construction of an east-west connection between the two lines, which

would pass through Miami International Airport and give South Florida its first truly expansive commuter rail service.

Amtrak is also eyeing the FEC corridor.

FDOT has tried several times in the past 12 years to secure federal funds to help pay for infrastructure improvements on the FEC. The improvements would allow Amtrak to run at least one of its trains on the coastal corridor, where it expects to increase its ridership. Federal funds, however, never materialized.

Agency spokesman Dick Kane says, "FDOT is now working with All Aboard Florida and Amtrak in coordinating train schedules to determine what the capacity investment needs are to accommodate Amtrak service down the east coast."

That means FDOT and Amtrak aren't sitting around waiting for federal handouts. They're collaborating with FEC, which has said the work it is doing for All Aboard Florida will both accelerate the possibility of Amtrak coming onto their tracks and reduce Amtrak's capital expenditures.

Other good news for Amtrak: The Miami station is moving to the Miami Intermodal Center when it opens next year. The new \$1.5 billion transit hub will bring together Tri-Rail, Metrorail, rental cars, and other transportation services, and connect to Miami International Airport via a people mover. MIA is the 12th busiest airport in the country, and traffic is projected to grow. That should mean better transit connections and more potential passengers for Amtrak.

On the down side, All Aboard Florida and Tri-Rail would likely cut into Amtrak's local ridership, especially if All Aboard Florida extends its passenger service to Tampa and Jacksonville, as the company has said it might.

Will Congress, or Florida taxpayers, continue to fund Amtrak's Florida routes with diminished ridership?

An Amtrak spokeswoman didn't directly address the funding issue but explained the company's position this way: "Amtrak long-distance trains serve Florida and are an important part of a larger national network connecting communities to larger cities and major urban areas. They serve passengers with disabilities, the elderly, and rural populations that are losing scheduled intercity air and bus service."

Sitting in the lounge car on the way back to Miami, a lithe young guy with skinny jeans and frosted hair slipped into the opposite seat at my table.

He plunked a large Ziploc bag stuffed with oatmeal onto the table, portioned a couple of scoops into a bowl, added water from a thermos and began to stir. He saw me watching him.

"Oatmeal," he said.

"Why do you have so much?"

"Because I'm poor."

We talked for a long while. His name was Dylan, he'd been on the train for 32 hours (it was supposed to take 27) and he was getting cabin fever. He just broke up with a long-term boyfriend in New York and wanted to get out of town "ASAP." Last-minute flights, however, were too expensive. Besides, he wanted an adventure "to clear his head." So he walked to the Amtrak station (you can do that in NYC) and bought a one-way ticket to Miami, where he knew no one and had made no hotel arrangements.

It didn't take me long to figure things out. He needed a place to stay for a few days until he went back to New York. I casually mentioned my wife. He dug into his oatmeal, and the conversation went uncomfortably silent.

"Do you know which are the most popular gyms on the beach?" he eventually asked. Gyms, it turns out, are a good place for a handsome young lad to score free accommodations in a strange town.

At 8:50 p.m. we arrived in Miami, two hours late.

"Never again," I heard a woman say. "I'd rather drive."

"This ain't nothin'," I heard another say. "I been on trains that be six or seven hours late."

I saw Dylan outside the station. He thought there might be a bus to Miami Beach. If not, no problem. "I like to walk," he said.

I pictured him sashaying through Miami's mean streets at night, clutching his backpack and bag of oatmeal. On the plus side, it probably wouldn't have taken long for a lonely, unfussy gentleman to offer him a ride. On the other hand, such encounters in Miami generally end in bizarre headlines.

I gave him a ride to the Omni bus hub near downtown.

"Good luck with your article," he said as he got out of the car. "I know it's gonna be great!"

"How are you getting back to New York?" I asked, out of curiosity.

"Not sure," he said. "But definitely not the train!"

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Slam the Door on Phony Locksmiths

Don't do what she did — be wary, ask to see a license, get a firm price

By Sarah Block
Special to the BT

When a friend recently expressed an interest in becoming a locksmith, I really hoped she meant the good kind.

I'd just gotten over the trauma of replacing my doorknob for the third time. The ordeal cost me more than \$100 and my evening plans, despite the company's online advertisement promising fast service and a flat rate of \$50.

I'm ashamed to admit this was the third locksmith I've called in the past two years, all of whom I found by entering "locksmith North Miami Beach" into Google search. None of them was able to open my door without drilling through the lock (destroying it), and forcing me to Walmart for yet another of Brinks's most common door handles.

I'd been waiting in my building's lobby for 90 minutes when he finally zoomed up in a white BMW and came in, toolbox in hand. I never got his name and didn't really notice that his "uniform," an undershirt and jeans, had no company name printed anywhere.

We rode the elevator to the third floor and I led him to my apartment door. He didn't ask me to verify that this was in fact my home; he just went right to work. I leaned against the wall, holding my breath as he used one hand to fiddle with the doorknob, the other to grasp blindly for tools in what looked like a very disorganized tool kit.

After five minutes, he turned to me and said his price would be \$120 if he kept at it, and that it could be at least \$200 if he needed to drill the doorknob. When I insisted that he stick to the price I'd been quoted, he gave me excuses:



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Maria Guadaluze of AAA Miami Locksmith: "We were servicing 35 calls a week. Now we're lucky if the phone rings four or five times."

the advertised price covering only the service call, not the labor; the labor cost is an "industry standard"; I had a very cheap lock — somehow a legitimate reason why he couldn't pick it.

I wasn't going to agree to an open-ended tab, and as I stood in freeze mode, waiting for my negotiating skills to turn on, he took a call on his cell phone. From his mannerisms and tone, it was a chummy call, but in a language I wasn't familiar with. When he finished, he turned to me and said he'd been

speaking with his supervisor. He could finish the job for \$80.

By now, I was tired of waiting outside my door, and I knew the drill, so to speak, from past experience. I could say goodbye to my doorknob and prepare to buy a new one. Because I had to get to work in the morning, and my phone was dying, I agreed.

The minutes following are a blur. He grabbed the drill, went to work, and the

Continued on page 46

W. Dixie Highway: A Sleepy Little Road Ripe For...

Take your pick: A) positive growth and development, or B) ruination

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

Alan Macken delivered newspapers in his youth. The stop that made the greatest impression on him was a two-story office building, with parking on the roof, at 17071 W. Dixie Hwy. in North Miami Beach. During the 1980s, it was the headquarters of Young Stern & Tannenbaum, an influential north Miami-Dade law firm.

"It has a wonderful history," Macken says. "It was a trophy when I bought it."

Macken, a developer who also built Sky Lofts on Miami Gardens Drive in Skylake and many projects in Broward, renamed the 39-year-old office building the Macken Aventura Professional

Building when he bought it for \$2.2 million in June 2005. Macken says he invested a substantial amount of money restoring it to its former glory. He even keeps a *Florida Architecture* magazine from 1975 that includes an article about the building and the law firm that once occupied it.

But Macken's affection for the building only goes so far. "I like the building," he explains. "I love the location."

Macken is asking the City of North Miami Beach to change the zoning of the 32,000-square-foot parcel on which his 20,000-square-foot building now stands. He wants it "upzoned" from B-1 to B-2. New buildings constructed on a B-1 parcel are capped at two stories. But on parcels zoned B-2, developers can build

up to 15 stories, or 150 feet.

Macken admits he has no firm plans for the site, should he get the zoning change. But he insists he has the drive and experience to spark more development in the area where he was raised. "Someone has to fix W. Dixie Highway," he says. "Why not someone who went to Sabal Palm Elementary, Highland Oaks Middle School, and North Miami Beach Senior High?"

W. Dixie Highway is a faded thoroughfare that zigzags from NE 119th Street in North Miami up through the unincorporated area west of Aventura known as Ojus, and on to the Dade-Broward County line. It winds past strip malls, industrial areas, condominiums, apartments, a cemetery, the Florida East Coast Railway, and the eastern entrance



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Developer Alan Macken: "Aventura looks good, and it's about time North Miami Beach follows that city's lead."

of the county's 250-acre Greynolds Park.

The two-lane road also hosts the Ancient Spanish Monastery, located at

Continued on page 48

When Was the Last Time You Used a Pay Phone?

Phone companies don't really care. Their big bucks come from ads — *lots* of them

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

Outdoor advertisements. In the City of Miami, they can be seen everywhere — on billboards along I-95, on giant murals affixed to buildings, on bus shelters, and on freestanding signs next to unsheltered bus benches. Some of these ads persist

to the Florida Department of Transportation, because they're on a state right-of-way without state permits. (Biscayne Boulevard is maintained by the state.)

State documents also reveal that advertisements on phone kiosks were forbidden under a "master" permit issued in 2007 that allowed First American Telecom, a Fort Lauderdale-based company owned by Goran Dragoslavic,



BT photo by Erik Bojnansky

Biscayne Boulevard and 28th Street: Each panel costs the advertiser \$800 per month.

in defiance of state and local laws. (See "Billboard Jungle," August 2013.)

You can also see advertisements for Cheerios, Reeboks, cologne, alcohol, and other products on dozens of pay phone kiosks in downtown Miami and all along Biscayne Boulevard. At least 12 of these kiosks, planted in the sidewalks of the MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District, operate in violation of the law, according

to install hundreds of kiosks along state roads throughout Miami-Dade County.

FDOT's July 16 letter to First American Telecom only focuses on 12 phones between 62nd and 87th streets along Biscayne Boulevard. The notice demanded their removal by August 12. There wasn't an "or else" clause in the letter, however. That's because there isn't any



BT photo by Silvia Ros

State officials say 12 of these phones along Biscayne Boulevard are illegal.

FDOT doesn't intend to touch the phones or fine the company. Instead they're going to leave it up to officials from the City of Miami or Miami-Dade County to deal with the phones — if they feel like it.

Nancy Liebman, president of the MiMo Biscayne Association, says she's flabbergasted. She spent months lobbying FDOT to do something about the kiosks in the MiMo District. "What kind of an agency," she asks, "sends out a letter telling people to get the things off [the state right-of-way] and then, in the next breath, says, 'Forget about it, call the City of Miami?'"

At worst, Liebman says, the pay phones can be used as an untraceable form of communication by pimps, prostitutes, and drug dealers operating in the district. At best, the kiosks, which she denounces as "billboards disguised as pay phones," are visual pollution. "In this day and age," she says, "with cell phones and Internet media, you don't need to have these things in your face, advertising products."

The source of the confusion is a Florida statute passed in 2009 that *allows*

advertisements on pay phones along state-maintained roads — with certain minimum standards, such as safety considerations, limiting each phone to three ad panels, and requiring ads to be less than eight square feet in size. However, the cities and counties where these ad kiosks are located were put in charge of regulating and allowing or prohibiting pay phones, with or without advertising.

"The 2009 state statute gives primary authorization to local governments for pay phones," FDOT spokesman Brian Rick writes in an e-mail to the *BT*. "FDOT would defer to the county/city on whether to allow/remove pay phones, unless there is a highway safety issue (too close to the road, for example)."

Miami-Dade County only issues permits for pay phones operating on county-owned rights-of-way in unincorporated areas, says county spokeswoman Suzy Trutie. County laws are also silent on pay phone advertisements, she adds.

Continued on page 52

Locksmiths

Continued from page 44

hallway echoed with its electric scream. Finally I was able to get inside and retrieve my car keys, and the locksmith escorted me in his vehicle to a nearby ATM. I reached out and handed him his money, from my car window to his, and he gave me a business card. I should call him to install the next lock, he said.

I realize now it was a poor decision to tear up his card as he drove off in the distance. But I was frustrated and tired. "You're *never* getting my business again!" I barked as I shook my fist.

Since then I've discovered the real beauty of "call history," which enabled me to track down his name by pasting his phone number into a Facebook search: Yaki Hazoom. He was skydiving in his Facebook profile picture, so I wasn't sure it was my guy until I pasted the name into a Google search and a mug shot came up on the website Arrests.org. I recognized him instantly.

The arrest took place in March 2009 in Broward County. Public records confirm that Hazoom was nabbed by Davie

police for exploitation of the elderly, a third-degree felony. Eventually he pleaded no contest to the charge and was fined \$517 and received six months' probation. (No more details about the incident were available by press time.)

I reported his name to Miami-Dade's Division of Consumer Protection and learned that he doesn't have a locksmith license. The license, I've since found out, is required in Miami-Dade County. I also phoned Mr. Hazoom for an explanation, but he didn't return the call.

Barry Roberts, an attorney for the Associated Locksmiths of America, says consumer education is the only way to avoid becoming the victim of a locksmith scam. "The Internet has really allowed the problem to multiply," he explains. "If you Google a locksmith, dozens of listings show up, and 90 percent are phony. If they have an address at all, it may be an empty lot or pizza parlor. The area code may say 305, but it's being answered in a boiler room in Missouri or in the Ukraine. Right now in Florida, someone convicted of a burglary 12 times can become a locksmith."

Don't Just Whine, Do Something

If you suspect that you've been scammed, you can file a complaint with the county's Division of Consumer Protection, which works directly with local law enforcement. There is a link to file a consumer complaint on their website, www.miamidade.gov/business/consumer-protection.asp. You can also call their consumer mediation hotline at 305-375-3677.

The State of Florida Attorney General's website has a contact form on its website, myfloridalegal.com/contact.nsf/contact, in which you can file a complaint regarding a locksmith scam. The data collected there may be used to substantiate a harder crackdown on scams and support statewide regulation of the locksmith trade.

I know exactly what he means. At one point I'd decided to scope out some of the businesses that come up on my own Google search for locksmiths near North Miami Beach.

Several locksmith businesses were operating in my immediate area, and Google showed that they had an address and phone number. When I started driving in search of a storefront, I found that only one of the four, Flat Rate Locksmith in Aventura, operated from the location that was listed online.

I called one of the numbers the Google search turned up and it rang several times before someone picked up the line. I heard a throat clear and then a man said, "Locksmith." I suspected he might have been sleeping. I asked where his business was located, and he responded by asking, "Where are you?"

I didn't need immediate service, I told him. I was just trying to get a sense of my options, and he stated that the business is mobile.

Continued on page 50

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For **CITY OF MIAMI COMMISSION - DISTRICT 5**

Elect Keon Hardemon on November 5, 2013

Keon's life demonstrates how trust in God, hard work, and education can carry someone from living in public housing to working as an attorney in the Public Defender's Office. As an Assistant Public Defender, Keon's responsibility is to represent those who cannot afford legal counsel, and as a City of Miami Commissioner, Keon will serve and defend the public's best interest every day.

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- Florida A&M University - Master of Business Administration
- Florida A&M University - Bachelor of Science, Business Administration
- Miami Northwestern High School - Diploma
- Congressional Black Caucus Political Education & Leadership Institute - Graduate

Commissioner Keon Hardemon will:

- Address the unemployment state of emergency that exists in District 5 (This unemployment crisis threatens Miami's goal of becoming a world class city)
- Utilize his professional, business, and legal training to protect taxpayers from inequitable contracts, such as the Marlins' Baseball Stadium Contract
- Provide more services for our seniors and programs for our youth
- Ensure that all competitive procurements of goods and services are conducted in a fair and transparent manner
- Work to ensure that all neighborhoods are a safe place to live, work, and play
- Respect City of Miami employees and their Collective Bargaining Agreements

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Political Advertisement Paid for and Approved by Keon Hardemon for City of Miami Commission District 5

"My passion for public service led me to become a candidate for City of Miami Commission representing District 5." — Keon Hardemon

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District 5 will be determined by all of us.

- **Safe and Clean Streets and Neighborhoods**
- **More Jobs and Businesses**
- **Futures filled with Hope for our children**
- **Real Accountability**



In all Neighborhoods within District 5.

There is only one way to do this...

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On November 5th Elect

JACQUI COLYER

City of Miami Commissioner, District 5

better**TOGETHER**miami.org

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W. Dixie Highway

Continued from page 44

16711 W. Dixie Hwy. Built in 1141, the monastery was transported in pieces to America and reassembled in North Miami Beach in the early 1950s.

Macken's zoning request is currently in limbo. That's because the North Miami Beach City Council is interested not only in rezoning Macken's property, but also the area surrounding it — 5.2 acres of land on both sides of W. Dixie Highway between NE 170th and 171st streets that consists of parking lots, retail, and low-rise office. Like Macken's land, the parcels are zoned B-1. City officials are examining the possibility of formulating a new "B-1.5" zoning category that would allow buildings somewhere between two stories and 15 stories.

Macken is fine with the delay, as long as the city creates the zoning that will allow him and "young bloods to come here, beautify the area, and give responsible developers an opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the city."

The notion of developing properties along W. Dixie Highway has drawn its



Artist rendering of the Hyatt Hotel complex, looking from W. Dixie Highway, Greynolds Park to the right.

share of critics. Some of them believe the upzoning talk is actually designed to enhance the prospects of a 658,500-square-foot commercial complex on a four-acre parcel at 17400 W. Dixie Hwy. The proposed complex is being developed by Braha Dixie LLC, a partnership headed by New York-based real estate investor Ralph Braha. Called the Parkview Business Center, the project, if built, will rise to 130 feet at its tallest point and include 275 Hyatt hotel rooms, Class-A offices,

retail, restaurants, and a 739-space parking garage.

The property is right next door to Greynolds Park's W. Dixie Highway entrance. Activists from around the nation, who formed a Facebook group called the Save Greynolds Park Committee, fear the project could ruin the park's ecosystem and aesthetics. (See "Green Piece" June 2013.)

In an effort to derail the project, Charles Baron, a land-use attorney and

resident of the seven-story Greynolds Park Club Condominium at 17890 W. Dixie Hwy., has filed a lawsuit challenging the city's rezoning last year of Braha Dixie's parcel from CF to B-2. Without that zoning change, it would be illegal to build the Hyatt-anchored complex. Only 35-foot-tall nursing homes, hospitals, museums, or government buildings are allowed on land zoned CF, or community facility.

Opponents of the Braha Dixie project fear that the noise, shadows, and traffic from the Hyatt project will also degrade the quality of life for residents living in the nearby Sunray East neighborhood. Michael Horton, a Boca Raton-based property appraiser hired as an expert witness by the Save Greynolds Park Committee, believes that residential property values near the Hyatt complex will plummet, thanks in large part to the vehicular traffic.

"When you live in a residential area, you want to be away from things that attract so much traffic," Horton explains. "That's why they generally build subdivisions away from commercial properties."

Continued on page 54



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 ★★ **TOMAS** ★★
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 MIAMI MAYOR
2013 *The people's mayor*

- Lowered taxes for residents during the past three years while maintaining City services at the same or at an enhanced level
- Commitment to continuing to hire professional and well trained Police officers to ensure the continued safety and quality of life in the neighborhoods that surround the Biscayne Corridor and throughout the entire City of Miami
- Supported and encouraged smart and responsible development throughout the City
- Successfully implemented single stream recycling and streamlined the City recycling process
- Committed to preserving the history of Miami for future generations. Worked to save the Gusman Theater and The Miami Marine Stadium

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Bayside, Belle Meade, Buena Vista, Miami Design District, Palm Grove, Shorecrest...

WE CAN DO BETTER!

I am **Robert Malone Jr.**, a native son of Miami, an education professional, and community advocate and I am fighting to represent you as District 5 Commissioner.

The great Upper East Side neighborhoods of Bayside, Belle Meade, Palm Grove, and Shorecrest are a culturally and economically vibrant area. For far too long, more time, attention and resources were spent in neighborhoods and areas other than the Upper East Side. Now that these communities have joined Buena Vista, the Miami Design District and other great Miami neighborhoods in City of Miami District 5, WE CAN DO BETTER.

WE CAN DO BETTER than having our commissioners make decisions that affect our businesses and residential communities in secretive back-door deals. As the District 5 Commissioner, I will be proactive, prompt and responsive to the residents and businesses of District 5. As well, I will conduct all city business openly and respectful of the wishes and needs the constituents committed to full access and accountability to you.



WE CAN DO BETTER than to allow our neighborhoods to be plagued by increasing crime and decreasing quality of life. These issues touch every corner of District 5 and I will work diligently to help the Miami Police Department hire the additional officers with adequate resources that they have needed for many years. More uniformed officers on the streets of Miami and in District 5 will inevitably reduce crime and help residents better enjoy our great city.

WE CAN DO BETTER than having city and county policies in place that are counter-productive to liveable and sustainable residential/commercial development. Far too many businesses are forced to close, suffer tremendous loss or merely never open because of the lengthy permitting process and the costly fees for water and sewer infrastructure improvements. As commissioner, I will proactively and vigorously represent District 5 in dealing with the inefficiencies of County and City governments on water and sewer issues. There is absolutely no reason for Miami to have been made to RETURN \$1.5 million of federal funding because the Commission and City Management failed to spend the designated money on public infrastructure.

WE CAN DO BETTER about mitigating the impact of increased vehicular traffic by advocating for solutions towards traffic circulation and improved mass transit. As Commissioner, I will work closely with County and State Government to redevelop, improve and expand the city's mass transit infrastructure.

I will consider all options, leaving no stone unturned to improve public access to businesses along the commercial corridors of District 5. I will work with all pertinent agencies to improve traffic flow in order to improve cycle and pedestrian access and safety. There needs to be a better drive/pedestrian balance in District 5.

District 5, I humbly ask for your support in my bid to become your next commissioner.



/DrRobertMalone



@DrRobertMalone

★★★★ **DR. ROBERT** ★★★★★
MALONE JR.
for City of Miami Commissioner, District 5

Political Advertisement Paid for and Approved by Dr. Robert Malone Jr., Candidate for City of Miami Commission, District 5



Locksmiths

Continued from page 46

At that point, I had no further questions, and moved on to the next business. Best Local Locksmith is located right around the corner at 16455 NE 22nd Ave. There I found a locked office that I could see was empty through the window.

I made a second call and got a similar greeting. "Locksmith," the voice said. This man, too, responded to my question about the location by informing me that it was a mobile business. When I asked if his business was licensed, he hung up.

Before I continue, I should mention that attorney Roberts contends a mobile locksmith can be perfectly legitimate. "Some start off in their garage," he says. "There's nothing wrong with that, but consumers should know who they're dealing with."

At this point, I decided to call first before paying a visit to America's Locksmith Service, which was listed in Little Haiti. "Locksmith," a man answered.

"Where are you located?"

"We're mobile."

"Are you licensed?"

"You keep asking the same questions! Now stop calling!"

That was odd. I thought I'd been practicing the art of comparison shopping, but my calls to the different numbers were actually being fielded by the same man.

This in itself is also not illegal. However, in Miami-Dade County, locksmiths must operate on behalf of a registered business with a minimum combined liability insurance of \$25,000.

The next week I repeated the same Google search. But now I found no trace of North Miami Beach Locksmith, Best Local Locksmith, or America's Locksmith Service. There were, I noticed, several new listings showing up in my neighborhood.

"There are a lot of crimes that are hard to stomp out," says Roberts, "and unfortunately, this is one of them." Associated Locksmiths of America is pushing for statewide licensing for locksmiths, and Roberts and other Florida members of the organization have fought for it over several past legislative sessions. The regulations would require an operating license, a criminal background check, training, and

the requirement of proof of identification while on calls. (It may seem obvious, but locksmiths can easily gain access to everything from private homes to public buildings. Hence the criminal background check.)

Miami-Dade is one step ahead of the rest of the state in this respect. All locksmiths operating within the county are required by law to have a license issued from Miami-Dade's Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources. They must also undergo a criminal background check and complete an apprenticeship. The regulations became effective in March 2012, and so far, the Division of Consumer Protection, partnering with local law enforcement, has caught about a dozen individuals advertising and operating as locksmiths without a valid license.

One legitimate local business, AAA Miami Locksmith, contacted Consumer Protection after suspecting that a recent plummet in its service calls may have been the result of a competing locksmith company in the area, Bacigalupo Locksmith, that they claimed was using false advertising tactics to lure potential customers.

The complaint from AAA was soon followed with others from other local locksmith businesses, such as Half Price Locksmith, Olivares Locksmith, and Pro Lock and Safe — all claiming that Pedro Bacigalupo's advertising methods — trashing their own businesses by using online reviews — had caused a loss in customers and large expenditure of resources to fight the spam.

AAA Miami Locksmith owner Maria Guadaluz, who opened the business with her husband in 2004, says Bacigalupo's negative contributions to their listing on Google+ and other sites confuse and dissuade potential customers. (Her own website, aaaml.com, was not hacked.) She says she was alarmed when she first noticed negative comments in review sections at various sites with links to Bacigalupo's business's listing on the Better Business Bureau website.

This was soon to be followed by regular overhauls of the thumbnail-image section of her listings by his own ads on neon poster paper with warnings like "scary" or "fake business" poorly scrawled in thick black letters. She says the first

Continued on page 54

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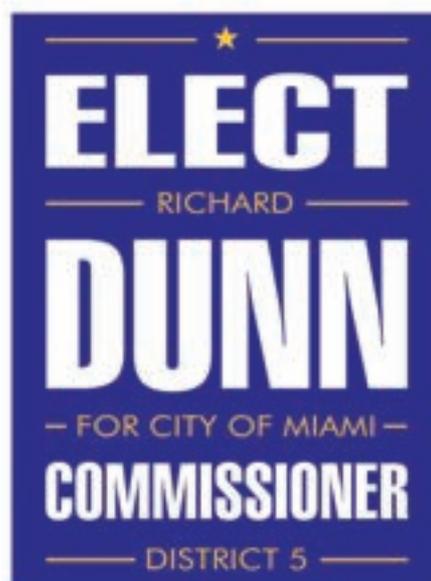
I humbly ask for your support as I seek to return to the City of Miami Commission. It was a pleasure to work on behalf of the residents of Miami, and I was very effective because of community support. I need your support again.

I was actively involved in efforts to improve Miami before I was a City Commissioner. I have worked for more than 30 years on important economic, social, and educational issues that affect our entire community. There is no substitute for EXPERIENCE and I will use my know-how to improve District 5 and Miami for all residents.

As **YOUR** Commissioner I will work to:

- * Create Economic Development
- * Improve Public Safety
- * Ensure Responsible Development
- * Advocate More Efficient Government”

VOTE
NOVEMBER 5
2013



Please join my growing list of supporters which includes:

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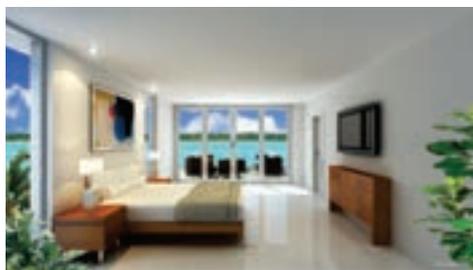
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ORAL REPRESENTATION CANNOT BE RELIED UPON AS CORRECTLY STATING THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DEVELOPER. FOR CORRECT REPRESENTATIONS, MAKE REFERENCE TO THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY SECTION 718.503, FLORIDA STATUTES, TO BE FURNISHED BY A DEVELOPER TO A BUYER OR LESSEE.

Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Pay Phone

Continued from page 45

The City of Miami *does* permit pay phones along county roads and city rights-of-way within its boundaries, but *not* state-maintained roads like Biscayne Boulevard. In fact, the city even has a law expressly forbidding it from granting permits to pay phones on state roads. In short, Miami currently has no laws dealing with pay phones on state roads.

Simon Ferro, an attorney and a lobbyist for First American Telecom, insists the phones are legal and that the ads subsidize the pay phones, which he asserts are still a public necessity. “We are currently the city’s largest provider of this vital economic and social service,” Ferro says. “In addition to normal daily usage, many thousands of free calls are made by City of Miami residents and visitors to 911 emergency and a variety of local-state-national social service agencies from our phones throughout each year.”

There are now 162 pay phones along public streets in the City of Miami, according to a study prepared by Daniel Goldberg, an aide to Miami City Commissioner Marc Sarnoff. Of these, 69 are located by state roads. The rest are adjacent to city and county roads — and thus permitted by the City of Miami. Most of those pay phones, 117 in all, have advertisements — with 48 located in downtown Miami, 12 in Edgewater, 11 in Brickell, 23 in the Upper Eastside, 21 in Little Havana, and two in Flagami.

Pay phone use in the City of Miami has been steadily dropping, Goldberg’s study reveals. In 2007, more than 1.7 million calls were made on pay phones. In 2012, there were only 572,624 city-wide, and only 192,564 of those calls were made from phones on the public right-of-way. That amounts to an average of three calls a day on public rights-of-way for pay phones that charge between 25 and 50 cents a call.

Emergency 911 calls from pay phones are free, and although such calls from pay phones in the city have been decreasing overall, calls from phones on public streets have been increasing, from 3010 in 2007 to 4431 in 2012.

Ferro insists pay phones will become even more important following natural disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey, or during occurrences like blackouts. “A healthy, viable, and accessible public telephone network is critical

to every community,” he says.

Goldberg counters that, in some parts of Miami, pay phones won’t be much help following a hurricane. While downtown Miami has 56 pay phones (including eight without advertisements) and the Upper Eastside has 23 (including one without ads), the working-class neighborhood of Allapattah has just seven — all without ads. Overtown, Liberty City, Coconut Grove, and Wynwood *combined* have only five pay phones along public streets, all of them also without ads. Says Goldberg: “They’re not evenly



BT photo by Erik Bojnansky

Biscayne Boulevard and 62nd Street: The Reebok ad campaign launched in mid-August.

dispersed throughout the city.”

It’s no coincidence that the areas with the fewest pay phones don’t carry advertisements. As First American Telecom’s website states: “Our phone advertising kiosks are placed in high traffic areas visible to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. You will reach the consumer head-on during the course of daily life.”

The City of Miami always had advertisements in mind back in 2001, when it allowed First American to set up dozens of pay phones along city and county streets *not* maintained by the state of Florida. In exchange, First American

Continued on page 56

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Locksmiths

Continued from page 50

thing she does every morning at the office is check her Google+ listing for spam. "This time last year, we were servicing 35 calls a week. Now we're lucky if the phone rings four or five times over the same period," Guadaluz says.

The final straw was when she discovered Bacigalupo, who is licensed by the county, had created a Google+ advertisement for AAA Locksmith, listing its current address, but had replaced their phone number with his, and included a link to his online home. When she called Bacigalupo and confronted him, she says, it did no good.

Guadaluz says this experience, combined with a larger awareness of the issue of fake locksmiths in operation, also gives her concern for citizens' personal safety. "Someone came in the store not long ago and told me that a locksmith she'd called to duplicate her key returned the next week to rob her home," she says.

The bottom line, she says, is to know who you're calling. To be prepared for

the potential lockout ahead of time, get to know the locksmith stores near your home, and save their numbers to your phone.

"For every real locksmith online, there are a dozen fakes," Roberts stresses, which should make it easy to weed them out. For one thing, don't bother with a business advertising a \$15 service fee. Second, if you call a business with little proof of establishment, such as a real website, and they answer your call with "locksmith" rather than the listed business name, they probably aren't a registered business. One online resource, Findalocksmith.com, has a list of locksmith businesses with active ALOA memberships.

Finally, if the locksmith you decide to hire shows up in an unmarked car and street clothes, doesn't provide locksmith identification, and doesn't ask for *your* identification prior to making an attempt to unlock your door, he is probably not legitimate. At that point, the best option is to do what I didn't when I had the chance: Call another locksmith.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

W. Dixie Highway

Continued from page 48

Baron doubts that narrow W. Dixie Highway will be able to accommodate increased traffic resulting from the high-rise Marina Palms condominium (now under construction at 17201 Biscayne Blvd.), the proposed Parkview Business Center, and upzoned developments in the vicinity of Alan Macken's property. "It's like a little village street now," Baron says, "and they want to make it like Biscayne Boulevard. It can't be a Biscayne Boulevard."

NMB elected officials, however, were emphatic in their support of a Hyatt Hotel on W. Dixie Highway when they unanimously approved Braha Dixie's site plan during a late-night council meeting on August 22. Members claimed that the project would bring jobs, tourists, more development, and excitement to the NMB area.

"Once things start moving in this city and things get exciting here, your property values are going to go up," Councilwoman Barbara Kramer predicted during the meeting. "I'm really excited by this project, excited to see North Miami Beach finally blossom."

Councilwoman Phyllis Smith says North Miami Beach needs additional tax-revenue sources to pay for constantly

rising city expenses and pension costs. "It would be a wonderful utopia if things were the way they were 150 years ago," she tells the *BT*. "But the truth of the matter is, the cost of living has increased. There is no sustainability unless we move forward."

Peter Zalewski, a real estate consultant and founder of CondoVultures.com, believes W. Dixie Highway is in fact moving forward, that its time has finally arrived. There is little land remaining in Aventura available for development, he points out. Plus office and retail rents in places like Aventura, Brickell, and Coral Gables have become so expensive that businesses are on the hunt for cheaper locations.

When the developers do come, they'll knock down what's there now and build anew. "It's a sleepy area that's ripe for tear-down," Zalewski says.

Macken hopes that city officials will maintain their pro-development momentum, especially along W. Dixie Highway. "Don't you think it's time to clean up the area?" he asks. "Aventura looks good, and it's about time North Miami Beach follows that city's lead and move in the right direction. I think that we have to create a new identity for the Dixie Highway corridor."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Pay Phone

Continued from page 52

was to pay the city 15 percent of its ad commission. In the past fiscal year, First American paid the city about \$27,000 in permit fees and ad commissions, according to a report by the city's auditor general. In contrast, First American receives \$62,400 a year for ads from Vector, a national outdoor ad company, on city and county roads. Vector, in turn, charges clients \$800 a month per panel for ads, the auditor general report notes.

However, FDOT's 2007 "master" permit with First American outright declared that "no advertisements will be allowed on any pay phone structure within the FDOT right-of-way limits."

The July FDOT letter points out that the 12 ad kiosks in the MiMo District were installed *after* 2008, a year after the master permit expired, "and were not a part of the permitted locations per the 2007 permit."

FDOT didn't reply to the *BT*'s questions about the legality of the other 57 pay phone advertisement displays on



N. Miami Avenue and 25th Street:
This relic is distinctive for carrying
no advertising.

state roads outside the MiMo District yet within the City of Miami, including at least a dozen on Biscayne Boulevard

Continued on page 58



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SAGAMORE
THE ART HOTEL

Pay Phone

Continued from page 56

between 14th and 58th streets.

Ferro claims the 2009 state law legalized pay phone advertisements. He also says, in response to written questions from Nancy Liebman, that “once the pay phones are installed, there is no need to renew the permit.”

If Miami officials ever did start issuing permits for pay phones located on state roads, the city could rake in at least another \$25,500 a year in permit fees and commissions, according to the city’s auditor general report. But just when Miami might amend its pay phone law is unclear.

During a June 27 Miami City Commission meeting, Commissioner Marc Sarnoff proposed that the city seek bids from companies interested in setting up a state-of-the-art kiosk system — one that might allow Internet access and provide local information for visitors. Sarnoff withdrew his idea for further tweaking, but not before commissioners Francis Suarez, Michelle Spence-Jones, and Willy Gort talked about how important pay phones can be for tourists and in emergencies.

Ironically, the pay phone advertisements, which seek attention from passersby, escaped the attention of most Upper Eastside activists until recently. Bob Powers, president of the Palm Grove Neighborhood Association, says he started noticing the kiosks as early as 2009. To Powers, the ad kiosks were just among a long list of problems that FDOT never got around to solving.

Liebman admits she didn’t spot them until last year, but suspects they gradually appeared in the MiMo district over a period of time. “It just kept mushrooming,” she says.

Unlike Liebman, who despises the apparently legal bus bench ad signs as well, Powers doesn’t mind outdoor advertisements in the MiMo district. But he can’t stand that the pay phones are installed on sidewalks. “Why do they have to be another obstacle on a pedestrian walkway?” he asks. “Why can’t they put it inside the NET office or in the lobby of one of these motels?”

Powers then answers his own question: “Probably because they’d ask for a percentage.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Two for Dinner

Our new correspondent invites us to get to know his favorite new Upper Eastside restaurant

By Ken Jett
BT Contributor

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a transplant from the Midwest who, after three years here, is still amazed every day by our city. Out of necessity, I've been involved in my Shorecrest community from the first week we lived here.

Having called Miami's Solid Waste Department (305-960-2830) to report illegally dumped trash, we were informed that, if the trash was determined to be on our property, we would be issued a violation. This was Miami's welcome wagon!

Since then, unfortunately, I've witnessed and personally experienced many of

the workings (and nonworkings) of the city.

Educated with master's degrees in education and psychology, I view the world through a different lens. In my work as a therapist, I was honored to gather many life stories as seen through the eyes of others. I've honed my skills to remain detached from the emotional reactions of others, allowing me to focus on outcomes rather than being sucked into the drama. Little did I know how useful these skills would be in dealing with the City of Miami.

I try to enjoy life, and am thought to possess a dry wit. I'm sure that will show as I find my voice over the next few issues of *Biscayne Times*, in this new role as the BT's Neighborhood Correspondent for the

Upper Eastside. Having composed mostly research papers, I'm excited at this opportunity to share my viewpoints in the first person. Oh, and did I tell you? I love wine and food, which brings me to the subject of this debut column.

Recently I was invited to attend the soft opening of Yasmine Kotb's new restaurant, Mina's Mediterraneo (749 NE 79th St., 786-391-0300; www.minasmiami.com). Kotb has creatively transformed an old warehouse into one of the warmest and most inviting places in the Upper Eastside. Don't be fooled by the nondescript façade. The property's interior space and outdoor area are welcome retreats from the craziness of 79th Street.

It was a pleasure to join friends, neighbors, and helpful city and county staff

in launching this Shorecrest gem. The contemporary dining room, with its huge factory windows, is marked by a clean décor, making it open and inviting. A sizeable parking lot guarantees that every guest will have a place to park, a rarity for restaurants in the Upper Eastside. Additional furniture will be arriving soon for



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Yasmine Kotb at her new restaurant, Mina's Mediterraneo.

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the outdoor bar and dining area.

Although the menu centers on the tastes of the Mediterranean, Mina's has something every palate will enjoy. From baked kibbe (meatloaf to this Midwesterner) to pizzas and osso buco to moussaka, everything was packed with flavor. Our table of friends did a stellar job of eating its way through many of the menu options, everyone declaring their dish superior. All remarked how the prices seemed low; you get great value for your money.

If these first few days are any indicator, Kotb has established a place that will become a second "home table" for many in the Upper Eastside.

Let me introduce you to the woman behind the wonder. Kotb, who was born in Egypt and emigrated with her parents to the U.S. in the 1980s, recalls that her mother and father experienced great difficulty in their Texas suburb finding the exotic ingredients needed to keep their food culture alive. They would drive hours to the nearest Middle Eastern market to purchase the requisite provisions. During summers Kotb spent in Egypt, her grandmothers would labor the entire day preparing family meals and

encouraged the children to participate.

Working alongside her grandmothers in Egypt and her parents at their Mediterranean restaurant in Texas, Kotb learned recipes while navigating restaurant life. After earning a college degree, she found her way into the world of music. This love for music was inherited, like her love of food, from her parents.

She spent 12 years of her life on the road as a lighting technician, tour accountant, promoter rep, and tour manager for artists such as Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney, Chicago, and the Who, affording her travel and dining opportunities that many of us only dream about. It was on a Cher tour that she picked up the nickname Mina.

At the pinnacle of her career in music, Kotb used her knowledge, experience, and cultural heritage to create a new recipe for personal growth. Start with a Miami vacation home that she adored. Add to this a pinch of encouragement received from Emilio Estefan, whom she met while working for his wife, Gloria. (The Estefans dined at the Kotb family restaurant in Texas and, according to Mina, Emilio loved the food and emphasized that Miami lacked Mediterranean options.) Add to this

an overflowing show of support by parents still able to help launch such a project. Stir and let marinate.

The location of her new restaurant was happenstance in that the commercial property immediately behind her Shorecrest home became available. By avoiding the high rent and touristic trends of South Beach, she was able to open as a sole proprietor in an area that would provide year-round business.

While hosting some notable food haunts like Marky's, the Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus, Boteco, Yiya's, Eastside Pizza, and Magnum's, NE 79th Street is also peppered with derelict properties. Mina started her project about 18 months ago, long before the Adler Group broke ground on its bayfront Shorecrest Luxury Apartments; before the INS building was purchased; and before Biscayne Plaza changed hands. It took a leap of faith to buy a dilapidated building on 79th Street, with a sex-offender encampment just two blocks away.

Kotb downplays the difficulties arising from zoning and code issues, obstacles that may have caused others to hesitate before trying to open a legitimate business

in Miami. The process was arduous, but it helped her build relationships with city and county officials. Although those relationships aided her in navigating Miami's notorious bureaucracy, she will think twice before beginning another venture.

A persistent community warrior, Kotb is concerned about the lack of foresight the Florida Department of Transportation is exhibiting with its project to resurface 79th Street, scheduled to commence in August 2014. She says she is dumbfounded that the need for improved traffic patterns and pedestrian safety are seemingly being ignored.

She and others are seeking the assistance of Florida State Sen. Gwen Margolis to overcome the roadblocks (no pun intended) that are impeding a broader reassessment of such a busy thoroughfare.

Kotb's life experience — the Egyptian hospitality, the family restaurant, managing and promoting projects, and her commitment to community — has culminated in the launch of this restaurant. She's eager to share her family table. Let's support our community supporter.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Assault on the Shores

As if tree-invading monkeys weren't enough, we also have home-invading criminals

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

The Upper East Side is being overrun by animals, and this time, it's not my fault.

Okay, *overrun* is probably a little bit of an exaggeration. But there does seem to be an increase in our local wildlife lately, both the domestic kind and the feral. Unwanted pet dogs are being dropped off to wander the streets in Miami Shores or left tied up in the middle of the night at veterinarians' offices (an abandonment practice that breaks my heart).

Enormous raccoons have been visible in our yards for the first time in years. The possums have been lingering until

long after daybreak. And that crashing sound you're hearing in the trees? That's not being made by a particularly large squirrel. It's being made by a particularly elusive monkey.

When I first heard that a monkey had been spotted swinging through the nearby trees, I thought it had to be an urban legend. But the Shorecrest resident who told me about it had actually received a neighborhood alert. She and her boyfriend had also heard the animal late at night, creating a ruckus and disturbing their dogs, which are fairly passive.

I was informed again about the monkey by a woman who was sitting on the lawn across from the Field House in Miami Shores. She was giving away

a litter of kittens, which she'd rescued from a neighbor who was going to take them to a shelter (having lost yet another beloved senior cat this summer, I couldn't just pass by). Although she hadn't witnessed anything herself, she'd been hearing about the monkey from friends.

Usually this kind of story — "I didn't see it, but my friend did" — would raise a red flag with me. But this is Miami, where anything is not only possible but probable.

As it turns out, the wandering primate or simian really does exist. Not only does it have quite the reputation, it has been tearing around town, carving



out an extensive territory for itself.

First spotted in early June around NW 87th Street and 16th Avenue before heading east, the animal has run across the hoods of cars, up stairways, and across rooftops. It's been photographed and



VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL NOTICE OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

Please take notice that on September 24, 2013 at 7:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be reached on the agenda, in the Village Hall of El Portal, located at 500 Northeast 87th Street, El Portal, Florida, the proposed ordinance with title stated below will be considered for enactment by the Mayor and Village Council of the Village of El Portal.

The proposed ordinance may be inspected by the public at the Village Hall and interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard in respect to the proposed ordinance, the title of which is as follows:

Ordinance No. 2013-001 Zoning Map Change

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND VILLAGE COUNCIL OF THE VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP OF THE VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL FOR SEVEN AREAS LOCATED WITHIN THE VILLAGE, AS DEPICTED IN EXHIBIT A; AND PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION OF RECITALS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT AND REPEALER; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

EXHIBIT A



August 19, 2013

Carolina Montealegre
Interim Village Clerk

filmed by various onlookers and news stations. (It appears to be a Vervet monkey.)

It has visited schools, including Barry University; parks, including Morning-side; apartment buildings, including the Miami Bay Club; and backyards, including that of the NW Boys and Girls Club.

Naturally, there has been some doubt expressed about just where this monkey, a friendly creature that is said to approach people, hails from. No nearby zoo has reported a missing simian or primate. Registered pet owners would have raised an alert. So unless Justin Bieber came to Miami with his undocumented companion and released it, it's likely an under-the-radar animal that was let go (abandoned) or escaped. And given its ability to elude capture by Fish and Wildlife officials, this monkey is enjoying the freedom, not to mention the last mangos of the season.

The other possibility is that there's more than one monkey involved.

My friends in Shorecrest believe it's a troop of them, given the amount of noise they heard. Others think it may actually be the group of wild monkeys who lived near the Fort Lauderdale airport, displaced by

construction and migrating south.

If that's true, they'll eventually settle in an area where there's plenty of fruit, insects, and water. That very well could be someone's property, such as mine. I wouldn't mind. After all, I've got the trees and the fruit for it. And the nut. (That would be me.)

Then again, monkeys aren't always so pleasant. They chatter and howl. They throw feces. They even, like iguanas, swim in your pool.

If the scenario of a primate swinging through your yard and eating (and pooping near) your early avocados horrifies you, don't worry. If you see it, just treat it like any other wild animal that needs removal: Call the authorities.

Don't try to trap it. Monkeys, even sweet ones, are a whole lot stronger, and therefore potentially more dangerous, than your average feral cat. Especially when feeling threatened.

And while a monkey infestation may not be exactly appealing, they're not the invaders we need to worry about. A human gang perpetrating home invasions is presenting a much bigger problem for the residents of the Shores,

El Portal, and Biscayne Park.

Indeed, the Miami Shores Police Department held a meeting on Friday night, August 23, to raise awareness and gather information about armed robbers who have been targeting the area. August has seen a rash of burglaries and home invasions, and it's pretty scary stuff; three of them, one in El Portal and two in Miami Shores, occurred within a ten-day period. Apparently, young men have been ambushing people returning home or who are outside late at night, between 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. They threaten with weapons and force the residents inside and proceed to strip homes of jewelry, electronics, cash, and credit cards.

No one, fortunately, has been injured, but the situation is serious enough that police are being completely transparent. The Shores Village website has a warning on its home page. Neighborhood Watch captains have delivered notices and started e-mail chains to warn homeowners.

Here are some of the ways you can protect yourself and your loved ones: If you feel that a car has been following you, lock your doors. Don't turn into your driveway, where you could risk an attack.

If the car speeds up, passes you, and tries to cut you off, dial 911 immediately.

If there's an unfamiliar car parked near your home when you leave or return, don't investigate on your own. Call the police, even if it turns out that your neighbor was having dinner guests. Better to be embarrassed than to be robbed at gunpoint.

Even if all looks safe when you reach your destination, don't sit in your car finishing a conversation on your cell phone. Hang up and be aware as you exit your vehicle.

Don't open the door for any unexpected deliveries. Don't walk the dogs — unless they're Rottweilers — in dark alleys. Be careful when taking out the trash and recycling; scan the surrounding area for young men between the ages of 18 and 25 wearing hoodies, as the suspects have been described, before exiting your home.

The police have the leads and say they're confident they'll soon apprehend the criminals. But until then, I for one would rather face down a whole troop of monkeys, even if they do end up decimating my prized mangos.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Aventura Status Symbol: Playoff Tickets

In the era of drugged athletes, some bragging rights have lost their sheen

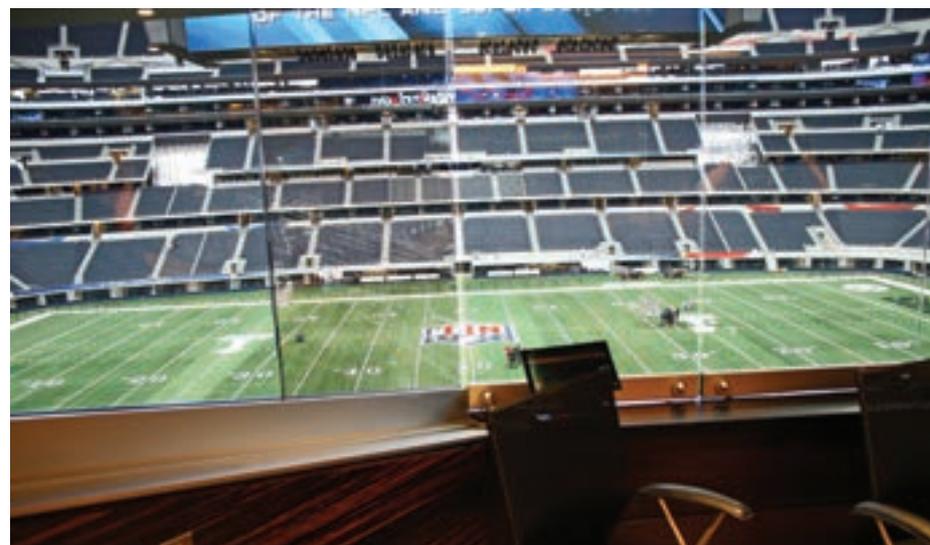
By Jay Beskin
BT Contributor

Every neighborhood has its particular status symbols, some of a pricier variety than others.

In certain areas, one can get by with an American flag mounted prominently over the front porch. If that flag is worn and tattered, the likelihood is, in this neighborhood no one will fault the owner. In fact, passers-by are more likely to weave some romanticized narrative into the ragged cloth. Perhaps one of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders carried it up a hill in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Maybe it survived a kamikaze attack aboard a destroyer in the South Seas during World War II.

In another part of town, one may need to invest a tad more to gain neighborhood prestige. It may do to park your Porsche in your tiled driveway, say, or dock your yacht (named something like *Sweet Thing* or *Crown Jewel*) behind your house. Even if the repo man begins making unpleasant rumblings, one must be vigilant against forsaking the Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt keep up with the Joneses!"

Here in our beloved Aventura, we are not so well suited to ostentatious displays. For starters, a sizable portion of our population lives in condominiums or townhouses, and hasn't much in the way of frontage for display. In such cases, the opportunities to set oneself apart from the pack are limited. This may be why



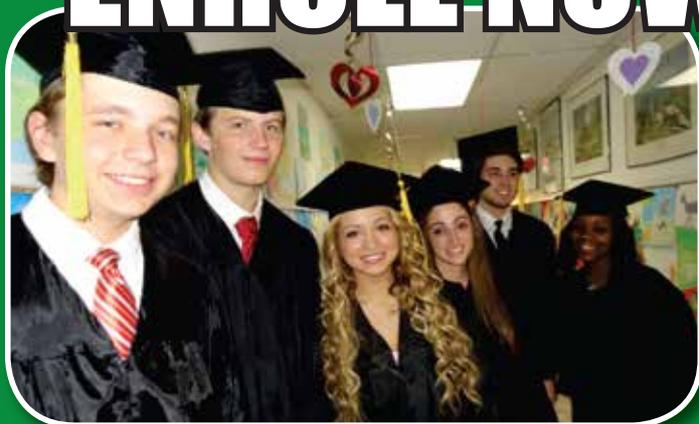
the comedian Jackie Mason likes to joke that class is measured here by the number of French words in the name of the housing development.

Other than that, the status options are more personal, more social, the things people in your circle of friends and acquaintances get to know about you — like which universities your children attend, which restaurants you patronize, which exotic destination you've selected for your next holiday.

From my local observations, the coin of the elite realm seems to be the season ticket to the local sports franchises. At gatherings of varying degrees of formality, this invariably provides a steady buzz.

In studiously casual tones, one fellow may murmur to another about the delay he suffered before receiving his Heat playoff tickets, despite his many years as a season ticket holder. Yes, he may let slip, the team does provide him with a personal account manager who is always

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available to him and who leaps to his slightest whim. But don't you agree it's irritating that the tickets to the championship round didn't arrive by FedEx until 24 hours before the opening day of that series?

His companion may cluck in empathy and match this apparently horrific episode with one of his own. "You know how the Dolphins have an annual reception to honor the holders of the most expensive seats in the house?" he may ask. "Where you get to meet the coaches and the players? Well, one of the star players flirted with my wife the entire evening! I mean, I know my wife is a very beautiful woman, and she gets a lot of attention everywhere she goes, but this fellow simply would not let up. These star athletes really have some gall, eh?"

And so it goes. All these woebegone vignettes about puny slights, inconveniences, and misunderstandings are artfully constructed to convey the price of the season tickets, the prized location of the seats, the fulsome pampering.

The exact origin of this culture in Aventura remains something of a mystery, but without a doubt it draws heavily

on the moments of glory our local teams have enjoyed over the years.

We all know well the history of the two Dolphin Super Bowl teams, including the unrivaled Perfect Season of 1972. The Marlins have been World Series champions in two of their 21 seasons, an achievement the Chicago Cubs have not managed in more than a century. The Heat are the reigning champions of the National Basketball Association, their third such victory and second in succession. Even the Florida Panthers skated their way into post-season competition in 2011-2012, for the first time in a dozen years.

As long as the hometown squads are episodic winners and not pathetic laughingstocks, this season-ticket competitiveness among Aventura's privileged can endure as an emblem of regional pride. Now the question arises: Can it survive the new revelation of Miami serving as

the clearinghouse for the performance-enhancing drugs that have corrupted the integrity of virtually every major sport?

The news each day brings more revelations and accusations in the sordid tale of our homeboy, Alex Rodriguez, and all his friends at the now-defunct Biogenesis rejuvenation . . .um... clinic.

It turns out that apparently every athlete who wanted his edge to come from a lab rather than a gym was heading down to South Miami. Here we had quasi-medical teams standing by to give code-named substances to code-named players, guaranteed to make them bigger, stronger, and quicker. Apparently it didn't make them any smarter, though, because all it took was one disgruntled employee and a small measure of scrutiny to pierce their deception.

Now that there is a notoriety and stigma in the arena of Miami sports, one wonders how long those season tickets

can continue to bestow the glow of status and remain a source of pride to their long-time holders. It seems like every time a relative or friend calls from New York or Chicago, the questions revolve around Miami drug dispensaries. They seem to expect that all this is happening on our street corners, that we are all regular customers, that we see the players coming and going all the time. (How smooth would it be to work *that* kind of detail into the next conversation about Heat tickets arriving by FedEx just this morning?)

Alex Rodriguez is appealing his suspension, and the pundits are fiercely debating his chances for reducing his season-and-a-third punishment. His lawyers may succeed in convincing the mediator that he should be sidelined for a considerably shorter period. But who do we turn to for redress?

We still own valuable tickets to their devalued games. Indeed, bragging rights about those tickets became our own performance-enhancing drug of choice. Ours was legal, but we may wind up paying a high price just the same.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Every time a friend calls from New York or Chicago, the questions revolve around Miami drug dispensaries.



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Miami's Parking Addiction

It's time to admit it, and address the problem

By **Adam Schachner**
BT Contributor

I spent the past month traversing the maelstrom of Miami's parking ordinances. The process started simple: The *BT* sent me to a panel on development and parking regulations hosted by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a nonprofit creating forums for envisioning efficient cities.

As someone with a nerdy fixation on transit and parking concerns, my experience was rapturous. While Miami's parking codes may not radiate sexiness, I can confirm the ULI forum was mind-blowing.

My takeaway is that Miami suffers from an over-reliance on cars that hinders progress and development. Miami has a deeply entrenched attachment to cars as extensions of personal space.

They are more than objects of material love and pride; they are dependencies in a region with few convenient alternatives.

The need to accommodate our vehicular attachment has influenced municipal design, dictated the terms of zoning for new development, and essentially set the conditions for our growth. Specific parking accommodations are mandated in construction layout, leaving the potential for charming, meandering, pedestrian-friendly boulevards on the cutting-room floor. Now that downtown is once again booming with high-density construction projects, we find ourselves challenged to maximize our limited infill while adhering to car-centric ordinances.

Miamians make a sport of complaining about parking. While the topics are usually limited availability or inconvenient locations, panel speakers at the ULI's forum, "Can Miami Develop Now

with Less Parking?" extended the scope of the issue. The panel's coverage acknowledged Miami's new season of the construction crane, then drew connections to the impact of car culture on the latest downtown growth spurt.

Some may wish Miami aspired to the cosmopolitan charm of urban centers such as Manhattan — where commercial and residential elements are integrated — but this vision will remain distant, owing to zoning crafted for our automotive society.

Jill Seiner, a University of Florida professor of urban and regional planning and a panelist on the ULI forum, diagnosed Miami's parking blight. Despite a downtown setting, Miami's urban core was built using suburban ideals and designs, particularly those that embrace a car in every driveway. These standards encourage development around parking, "as if cars generated economic activity, instead of people."



BT photo by Adam Schachner

Brickell parking scene: Too many cars, too few alternatives.

A dispiriting cycle emerges from Seiner's observation. City centers primarily accommodating drivers create dangerous conditions when there is limited car storage. Navigation is tight on city streets. Drivers cruise distractedly looking for a free space.

Seiner explained that municipalities looking to solve these issues tend to create excessive parking in the form of garages and open lots. This works against

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mom-and-pops and independent establishments relying on their storefront for advertising (because the storefronts are so far removed from the street that the chances they will catch the eye of a passerby are virtually nonexistent). Instead, we get big boxes and supermarkets.

This is a familiar story in the Brickell area, which hosts three Publix supermarkets with ample parking, all located between SW 7th and 13th streets. To the best of my knowledge, there is only one curbside market, the Brickell Deli Market, on the commercial outskirts of S. Miami Avenue.

Limited options for independent businesses are only one facet of parking's economic influence. A staggering correlation exists between space allocation and income disparity. This was addressed by panelist Bernardo Fort-Brescia, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and cofounder of Arquitectonica.

Under the "Miami 21" zoning code, Fort-Brescia explained, developers must provide one-and-a-half parking spaces per occupied residential unit, regardless of that household's size. The result is that "a studio apartment has as much

of a parking burden as a three-bedroom apartment. We have a problem here. We are creating a city of second-home wealthy users, but in the end, the cost transfers to the consumer." One example: Well-heeled condo owners who live here part-time leave their cars parked in the off-season. Meanwhile, larger households of full-time residents struggle with their building's jammed parking garage.

In a city reliant on cars, this leaves little room for households with multiple income-earners who must drive separate cars to work. I frequently see this at my own building: fierce competition for spaces, forcing some to hunt for street parking blocks away. Guest parking is virtually nonexistent. In short, residents with less money are fighting for fewer parking spaces.

Fort-Brescia challenged this bureaucratic adherence: "The real question is whether there should be a parking code to begin with." The current system, he said, does not give most developers leeway to take risks in designing projects with limited parking. (One downtown condo project, Centro Lofts, will be the first with no parking garage.)

One consensus among panelists, it seemed, was a focus on small-scale developments. Zoning outside of downtown Miami generally limits the size and height of building projects to prevent the spread of high-rises. Areas that must adhere to these restrictions can maximize walkability and unique businesses — if they can get beyond the parking requirements.

A reasonable standard for space-conscious growth is Wynwood, with its streetside galleries. A once-industrial neighborhood devoid of pedestrian action is now known for its walking culture, its consumer traffic, and happenstance encounters among individuals — all a product, in part, of limited parking.

Joseph Furst of Goldman Properties, a pioneer in the area's revitalization, explains that, with the exception of quickly filled street parking, many properties have no parking lots, therefore "people are forced to park away from their destination, and they have to walk and engage."

Andrew Frey, the ULI panel host and founder of Townhouse Center, a nonprofit organization advocating conditions for small-scale urban growth, sat with me recently and summarized

the potential for thriving communities beyond downtown's urban core. In his estimation, downtown will continue to scrape the sky as a financial district, while peripheral neighborhoods such as Little Havana, Overtown, and Wynwood will become emblematic of compact and efficient residential and commercial urban growth.

One of his views resonates: A fully developed locale will have a harder time building back *down* from its towers than constructing moderately upward. The resurgence of construction cranes downtown may indicate that our urban core is permanently beyond small scale, but municipal centers throughout Miami are primed to embrace designs that build to the sidewalk and show off their city's compelling attributes, rather than create parking gaps between people and their destinations.

A parting thought that stuck with me, following the ULI panel, was how often I must compete for parking around town. Maybe we need to ask ourselves if the convenience of arriving by car is worth each stress-inducing contest for parking we endure.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The state puts a big chunk of Oleta River State Park on the auction block

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Wake up, North Miami and points beyond! While we were sleeping in August, the state quietly indicated its desire to reduce the size of Oleta River State Park by 150 acres and designate that chunk of mangroves and protected wetlands as “surplus property” available for purchase.

This is huge, folks.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has put two parcels on a statewide list of publically owned land to be considered as *surplus*. On August 22 and August 23, as people were getting their children off to schools and college, and trying to jump into their fall work rhythms, the DEP hosted two webinars to describe the process facing

state-owned land across Florida, including Oleta River State Park and a necklace of parcels along the Florida Keys.

The state parkland up for grabs comes in two pieces. The biggest piece, at 129 acres, lies right between the Biscayne Landing site and Florida International University within the City of North Miami, and includes a potential road from 143rd Street and Biscayne straight to the FIU campus. Well, fancy that.

FIU President Mark Rosenberg desperately wants a second, four-lane road for campus, which is currently accessible only from 151st Street. FIU did not respond to e-mails, so for now, let us attribute the selection of this coveted morsel to Providence rather than lobbying efforts.

The second parcel, of 21 acres, sits directly behind the North Miami-Dade Justice

Center on the east side of Biscayne Boulevard and 155th Street.

While the larger parcel (see map) may look like nothing but woods from the air, it lies next to the city’s East Arch Creek Environmental Preserve and nature trail, which includes mangroves, buttonwoods, rivulets, and swamp. These are among the last remaining mangroves in northern Biscayne Bay.

Now that people realize what transpired, they’ve sprung into action. They include North Miami Council members Carol Keys and Scott Galvin, Tropical Audubon Society Executive Director Laura Reynolds, and North Miami environmental lawyer Maureen Brody Harwitz. Bloggers Stephanie Kienzle at votersopinion.com and Eye on Miami also helped sound the alarm.

Don’t be surprised if you see former Gov. Bob Graham enter this debate. He



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The two Oleta parcels state officials claim are “surplus.”

was governor when Oleta River State Park opened in 1986, with Marjory Stoneman Douglas among the guests. Way back, the Tropical Audubon Society’s Tom Pafford and Harvey Abrams assembled the land for the park, which

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is now South Florida's largest urban park (1043 acres); and Graham worked hard to ensure it would happen. In 2011 he founded, and still chairs, the Florida Conservation Coalition, which he launched in response to the aggressive rollback, by Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature, of 40-year-old environmental protection policies.

Keys said she intended to put this on the City Council agenda as an emergency item for the August 27 meeting. "These are protected wetlands, and I hope the City Council puts green space ahead of dollar signs on this," she said. "Whoever is doing this is looking to tippy-toe through environmental regulations to put in a road. This land is so fragile."

Time's a wastin'. If you want to chime in, make plans to attend the next meeting of the DEP's Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC), which manages state-owned lands, in Tallahassee on September 13...which happens to be...Yom Kippur, the holiest of the High Holy Days.

So good luck getting elected representatives like county Commissioner Sally Heyman, state Sen. Gwen Margolis, or Congresswoman Debbie

Wasserman Schultz — or Mark Rosenberg or Carol Keys, for that matter — to travel all that way on Yom Kippur (this timing may be coincidental; let's just say that Tallahassee isn't exactly famous for its lox and bagels).

If you can't make it to Tallahassee, you can e-mail your opinion *before September 12* to the following address: ARC_mailinglist@dep.state.fl.us. To learn more, go to www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/assessment/Maps.htm.

Harwitz, the environmental lawyer, jumped into the fray quickly and sent an open letter to media, activists, and officials asserting, among other things: "There are no 'surplus' mangroves in Biscayne Bay waters. It's like saying there are surplus pinelands on Dade County land. It is outrageous for Governor Scott to treat these invaluable and essential mangrove wetlands as if they were excess inventory that needed to be cleared out. Governor Scott, once again, through this proposed action of his agency, shows total ignorance and callous disregard for South Florida and its unique subtropical environment and its history."

Laura Reynolds of the Tropical Audubon Society participated in the

DEP webinars and says, "The value of open space isn't just having a park, but it performs a valuable function of cleaning water, protecting fish and wildlife, preventing algae blooms in Biscayne Bay, and providing recreation to the public. This is what keeps Biscayne Bay clean. I do believe we still have a chance to get this pulled off the list altogether, if enough people send e-mails to the ARC address."

If these parcels don't get pulled from the auction list, Governor Scott has other options. The state could lease the land to another public entity, such as FIU or the City of North Miami. In that case, either the university or the city could have a shot at building a road through the wetlands area. FIU almost certainly cannot afford it, and the City of North Miami would require a bond issue, as the \$20 million windfall from the Biscayne Landing developers is pretty much spent.

Scott Galvin, who sat in on the webinar, says his first inclination is to side with Keys, but he also could see a compromise that could address FIU's road-access issues through a bond issue and elevated road.

North Miami City Manager Stephen Johnson says he'd heard nothing of any of this until Carol Keys told him on August 22 and is quite curious. "Although it's state land," he says, "whatever they do is going to be important to the City of North Miami because it's all within city limits. This is definitely worth our close attention."

* * *

Expect a quick decision from Circuit Judge Jorge Cueto over whether to oust Lucie Tondreau from office as North Miami's mayor because she allegedly doesn't live in North Miami.

The judge, an ex-cop and trained accountant who came to his judgeship from the State Attorney's public corruption unit, has reserved September 9 and 10 for hearings. He does not suffer fools or continuances gladly. He just denied City of Miami Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones a third term.

All that should be good news for Kevin Burns as plaintiff, ex-mayor, and 55-44 loser in the June 4 runoff election. What happens next, and its effect on the city, is subject for another column.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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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

In a vacant lot on N. Miami Avenue, between 9th and 10th streets, two 18-foot inflatable sculptures will be waving in the wind for three days in September. One will resemble a giant hammer, the other a nail, and their dance reflective of the latest urban area waiting for redevelopment.

At the Christ Fellowship Church on NE 1st Avenue, another giant inflatable, this time in the form of Godzilla, will be bouncing off the façade. Who's trying to take over the city here?

These sculptures are part of the temporary public artworks project that will be part of DWNTWN Art Days, which has a mission to highlight downtown developments.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a cultural arts weekend in downtown Miami would have been inconceivable just a few years ago — a joke even. A concert at the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts was possible after 2006, but dinner and an art exhibit? Forget it.

So it truly is a milestone when the *second* DWNTWN Art Days will take place over three days, from September 20 through September 22, which includes tours of newly arrived art spaces, film screenings, performances, wine

tastings, and bike and trolley rides.

It's too early to proclaim that downtown Miami has arrived as a destination cultural neighborhood in the way that Wynwood has, but this weekend is a good start. It would also be a mistake to compare it to the Wynwood art walks or the Coral Gables crawls. The downtown Miami that you can explore during the event is spread out, from Brickell in the south to the Arsht



Trenton Duerksen will dump \$1300 in coins into a Brickell Avenue fountain.

Center in the north, from Biscayne Bay in the east to N. Miami Avenue to the west. But even compared to last year, the number of new venues and activities is amazing.



Preview of a transformed Christ Fellowship Church, 500 NE 1st Ave.

The rapid development of the downtown area — which hit a pause button during the recession but came roaring back — prompted the Miami Downtown Development Authority to form a Cultural Advisory Group to promote what was starting to happen in Miami's urban center. Last year the group asked independent curator Claire Breukel to organize a weekend that would feature various institutions and venues — at a time far enough away from Art Basel to distinguish itself, but as a one-off event and not a monthly night.

South African native Breukel, who works out of Miami and New York on local and international projects, says the

unique perimeters and makeup of the area presented certain challenges at first. "Most of the [proprietors of the establishments] hadn't even met each other," she recalls. "It's so spread out that a 'walk' night wouldn't really work. It's also a financial district," which would mean major buildings would be closed by 5:00 p.m.

They decided on an inaugural event that would take place both during the day and the evening, with organized bike, walking, and trolley tours to get people from one end to the other. Breukel's main job was to get everyone to open their doors, with something to offer for the public, and then add some attractions.

So last September the Miami Art Museum on Flagler Street (now transitioning to the Perez Art Museum Miami, soon to open on the bay), the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), the Miami-Dade College Gallery at the



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Photo courtesy of Michael Blaser

Curator Claire Breukel: "It's so spread out a 'walk' night wouldn't really work."

Freedom Tower, along with a few galleries and some pop-up spaces, all opened for a weekend.

In addition, a film about the artist Gerhard Richter was screened, and performance artist Misael Soto set out his 60-foot by 60-foot *Picnic Blanket* in Bayfront Park, where visitors were encouraged to come play, eat, and take back the park for public consumption.

The biggest change this year, according to Breukel, is that the event is noticeably expanded, with more places to visit and more arts and entertainment options. For instance, on September 20 at the sprawling Freedom Tower, several art exhibits will be on display, but Miami-Dade College's cultural affairs arm is also kicking off its season with a free

jazz piano concert from rising Brazilian star André Mehmari.

The ArtHouse complex on NE 11th Street, which is home to artist studios and the alternative galleries of Dimensions Variable and Bas Fisher Invitational, both of whom left the Design District, will be included on a series of art walking tours led by artist Thom Wheeler.

Over on Biscayne Boulevard, another fairly new arrival to the neighborhood, the Spanish Cultural Center Miami, will feature an exhibit that explores the African, indigenous, and Hispanic origins of Latin American music.

In one stop on the Boulevard, at Wine by the Bay (888 Biscayne Blvd.), you can view works from Japanese artist Yozo Hamaguchi; watch the



Last year Misael Soto spread out his *Picnic Blanket* in Bayfront Park.

award-winning documentary *Storm*, about legendary California winemaker Ernst Storm; and sip the fruits of the grape as well, with two California wine tastings, during Wine by the Bay's two-day event titled "September's Storm."

And while winding your way through it all, you are sure to encounter one of the seven public art projects, such as the inflatable Godzilla. The public artworks are a new addition this year, organized by curator Amanda Sanfilippo.

These are not just site-specific, says Sanfilippo, but context-specific — in other words, the artists were asked to work with the broader narrative of the place they would be putting up their art, with the history, the monuments, the people involved in the space. She narrowed more than 50 applications from across the country to seven, with two of whom are from Miami: Tom Scicluna and Gean Moreno.

Scicluna will put up a piece in a vacant lot on 11th Street, and Moreno

will make posters available throughout downtown. New York artist Trenton Duerksen will dump the \$1300 he got for his commission, all in coins, into a fountain on Brickell. The art will be gone after September 23, which is part of the point in addressing the fleeting nature of places on the verge of gentrification.

Also new this year: There will be a central information hub where you can find out about the various tours and modes of transportation, which includes not only bikes and trolleys this year, but the Car2Go, as well; and get details on times, performances, readings, talks, and exhibits.

DWNTWN Art Days takes place from Friday, September 20, through Sunday, September 22, with the information hub at Grand Central Park at Miamiworld Center, 700 N. Miami Ave., www.dwntwnarts.com.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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8351 NE 8th Ct., Miami
 305-754-2093
 www.susannacaldwell.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

CARIDI GALLERY

785 NE 125th St., North Miami
 786-202-5554
 www.caridigallery.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

CAROL JAZZAR CONTEMPORARY ART

158 NW 91st St., Miami Shores
 305-490-6906
 www.cjazzart.com
 By appointment: carol@cjazzart.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

CURATOR'S VOICE ART PROJECTS

299 NW 25th St., Miami
 305-502-5624
 www.curatorsvoice.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

DANIEL AZOULAY GALLERY

Shops at Midtown Miami

Store # 120 Buena Vista Blvd., Miami
 305-576-1977
 www.danielazoulaygallery.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-573-8110
 www.davidcastillogallery.com
 Through October 31: TM Sisters

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
 305-576-1804
 www.difinearts.com
 September 6 through October 31:
 Molly Zuckerman-Hartung

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

686 NE 56th St., Miami
 786-536-7801
 www.diasporavibe.net
 Call gallery for exhibition information

DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

100 NE 11th St., Miami
 DWNTWN ArtHouse
 305-607-5527
 www.dimensionsvariable.net
 September 20 through October 20:
 "Pyramid Solitaire: Importing/Exporting Attitudes" with Daniel Bjornsson, Ragnar Helgi Olafsson, Ingibjorg Sigurjonsdottir, Anna Hrunn Masdottir, Asdis Sif Gunnarsdottir, and Magnus Sigurdarson
Reception September 20, 7 to 10 p.m.

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Culture: GALLERIES + MUSEUMS

www.dinamitrangallery.com
September 12 through October 25:
"New Work" by Peggy Levison Nolan

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

187 NW 27th St., Miami
305-573-9994
www.dotfiftyone.com
September 12 through October 30:
"Taxonomy of a Landscape" by José Landet
Reception September 12, 7 to 10 p.m.

ELITE GALLERY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
754-422-5942
www.elitefineartgalleries.com
September 14 through October 4:
"Hero's Last Stand" by Giancarlo Ciavaldini
Reception September 14, 7 to 10 p.m.

EMERSON DORSCH

151 NW 24th St., Miami
305-576-1278
www.emersondorsch.com
Through October 12:
"Belle Captive" by Victoria Fu
"Lookout Parade" by Matt Rich

ETRA FINE ART

50 NE 40th St., Miami
305-438-4383
www.etrafineart.com
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FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
305-448-8976
www.snitzer.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

GALLERY 212 MIAMI CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

2407 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
516-532-3040
www.gallery212miami.com
Through September 2:
"Wynwood Art Group Special Summer Exhibition" with Michael Perez, Hamilton Aguiar, Rogério Fernandes, Rosana Ferolla, Claudio Souza Pinto, Artie Sandstone, Charlotte Harber, Carol Reeves, David Haradin, Fred Love, Sean Murdock, Alicia Erminy, and Charlotte Oedekoven

GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288
www.gallerydiet.com
September 19 through November 2:
"Why Is Reality a Word" by Allan Graham (Toadhouse), curated by Phong Bui
Reception September 19, 6 to 9 p.m.

GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami
305-576-0256
www.garynader.com
September 1 through 30:
"XX Century Masters" with various artists

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769 NE 125th St., North Miami
786-467-0941
www.generalaudiencepresents.com
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2239 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-456-5478
www.gsfineart.com

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HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
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www.haroldgolengallery.com
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IDEOBOX ARTSPACE

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

JUAN RUIZ GALLERY

301 NW 28th St., Miami
786-310-7490
www.juanruizgallery.com
September 19 through October 19:
"Fractures" by Victor Vazquez
Reception September 19, 7 to 10 p.m.

KABE CONTEMPORARY

123 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-573-8142
www.kabecontemporary.com
September 21 through October 31:
"Recent Works" by Karmelo Bermejo
Reception September 21, 6 to 9 p.m.

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
305-448-2060
www.kavachnina.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
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KIWI GALLERY

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

KIWI ARTS GROUP PROJECT SPACE

117 NE 1st Ave., Ground Floor, Miami
305-213-1495
www.kiwiartsgroup.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

LELIA MORDOCH GALLERY

2300 N. Miami Ave., Miami
786-431-1506
www.galerieleliamordoch.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

LOCUST PROJECTS

3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
September 19 through October 12:
"Grid's World" with Alexandra Hopf, Marcos Valella, Siebren Versteeg, Gabriel Vormstein, and Odalis Valdivieso
Reception September 19, 7 to 10 p.m.

MARKOWICZ FINE ART

114 NE 40th St., Miami
786-362-5546
www.markowiczfineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information



Victor Vazquez, *Shelter*, mixed media, 2012, at Juan Ruiz Gallery.

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Freedom Tower
600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700
www.mdcmoad.org
Through September 21:
"A Poetic Reality: Magical Realism of the CINTAS Fellows Collection" with various artists
September 13 through November 17:
"A Painter and Her Audience" by Antonia Eiriz
"Elaborate Webs/Striking Exploits" by Anne Austin Pearce and Sara Stites
September 20 through November 2:
Leandro Vazquez

MICHAEL JON GALLERY

122 NE 11th St., Miami
www.michaeljongallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

NEW WORLD GALLERY

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

NINA TORRES FINE ART

1800 N. Bayshore Dr., Miami
305-395-3599
www.ninatorresfineart.com
September 6 through 27:
"Mexican Art Visions 2013" with various artists
Reception September 6, 7 to 10 p.m.

N'NAMDI CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

177 NW 23rd St., Miami
786-332-4736
www.nnamdicontemporary.com
Through September 7:
"The Space Between" by Neha Vedpathak

NOW CONTEMPORARY ART

175 NW 25th St., Miami
305-571-8181
www.nowcontemporaryart.com
September 14 through October 31:
"Doppelnature" by Shawn Smith

O. ASCANIO GALLERY

2600 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-571-9036

www.oascaniogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

ONCE ARTS GALLERY

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

OXENBERG FINE ART

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-854-7104
www.oxenbergart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

PAN AMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
September 12 through November 22:
"Vanitas" by José Toirac and Meira Marrero
Reception September 12, 6 to 8 p.m.

P.S.H. PROJECTS

72 NW 25 St., Miami
305-576-1645
www.pshprojects.com
Through September 30:
"Storage Memoir: 1996-2013" with various artists

PRIMARY PROJECTS

151 NE 7th St., Miami
954-296-1675
www.primaryprojectspace.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

ROBERT FONTAINE GALLERY

2349 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-397-8530
www.robertfontainegallery.com
Through October 4:
"Chronology: A Timeline, Select Fine Art Works, Post War to Today" with various artists

SAMMER GALLERY

125 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-441-2005
www.artnet.com/sammergeallery.html
Through September 15:
"A Life in Color" by José Gurvich

SPINELLO PROJECTS

2930 NW 7th Ave., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinelloprojects.com
Ongoing:
"State of the Book" by Antonia Wright and Ruben Millares

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

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http://swampspace.blogspot.com/
swampstyle@gmail.com
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2750 NW 3rd Ave., Ste 4, Miami
305-284-3161
www.as.miami.edu/art
September 10 through 27:
"Landscape is Landscape" by Lidija Slavkovic
Reception September 14, 2 to 9 p.m.

UNIX FINE ART GALLERY
2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-496-0621
www.unixfineart.com
Ongoing:
Alexis Torres
Through September 13:
"Sweet Tooth" by Andrew Holmes
"The Mastery of Face Recognition" by Andrzej Dragan
"The Three Dictators" by Eugenio Merino

WALTMAN ORTEGA FINE ART
2233 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-5335
www.waltmanortega.com
September 14 through October 15:
"European Hyperrealism" with Alain Bertrand, Ronald Dupont, Fernando Kindelan
Reception September 14, 4 to 9 p.m.

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

YEELAN ART GALLERY
294 NW 54th St., Miami
954-235-4758
www.yeelanart.com
September 14 through December 21:
"Genesis" by Jerome Soimaud

ZADOK GALLERY
2534 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-438-3737
www.zadokgallery.org
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MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

ARTCENTER/SOUTH FLORIDA
800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
Through September 8:
"Artha Project" with Tyler Healy, Dean Levin, and Evan Robarts
Through September 29:
"I-95 South" with Tyler Healy, Johnny Laderer, Dean Levin, Gustavo Oviedo, Luis Pinto, Evan Robarts, and Kyle Yanagihara

BASS MUSEUM OF ART
2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through November 3:
"Rufus Corporation" by Eve Sussman

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)
1018 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-455-3380
www.cifo.org
Through October 27:
"Deferred Archive: 2013 Grants and Commissions Program Exhibition" with various artists

CRAIG ROBINS COLLECTION
3841 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
Dacra
305-531-8700
www.dacra.com
Ongoing:
Richard Tuttle, Marlene Dumas, John Baldessari, Elizabeth Peyton, and Kai Althoff, curated by Tiffany Chestler

DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
23 NE 41st St., Miami
305-576-6112
www.delacruzcollection.org
Ongoing:
"Works from the Collection of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz" with various artists
Ongoing:
Carlos Alfonzo



Wifredo Lam, *Oiseau et Personnage*, oil on canvas, 1971, at Gary Nader Fine Art.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890
thefrost.fiu.edu
Through September 3: "The Drawing Project" with various artists, curated by Emmy Mathis
Through September 22:
"Concealed Spaces" by José Manuel Ballester
Through September 29:
"Six Degrees of Separate Nations" by Ebony G. Patterson and Peterson Kamwathi
Through December 31: "Deep Blue" by Javier Velasco
September 18 through October 13:
"Faculty Show" with Pip Brant, and Michael Namkung
September 18 through January 5:
"Crisis and Commerce: World's Fairs of the 1930s" with various artists
"Naturalism/Artificiality: Expeditions, and Research of the Herbarium of Artificial Plants" by Alberto Baraya

LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535
www.lowemuseum.org
Through October 13:
"Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States" with various artists
Through February 9:
"Terrestrial Paradises: Imagery from The Voyages of Captain James Cook" with various artists
Through April 27:
"The Art of Panama" with various artists

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through September 8:
"Picturing People" by Dawoud Bey
September 27 through November 3:
"Love of Technology" with Luis Fernando Bedit, Ian Cheng, Jason Galbut, Lena Henke, Morag Keil, Oliver Laric, Ben Schumacher and John Keenen, Josh Smith, Jack Strange, Anicka Yi, Andrea Zittel, Calla Henkel, and Max Pitegoff
Reception September 26, 7 to 9 p.m.

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
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THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami
305-573-6090
<http://rfc.museum>
Call gallery for exhibition information

VIZCAYA MUSEUM AND GARDEN

3251 S. Miami Ave., Miami
305-250-9133
www.vizcayamuseum.org
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A Model Film Festival

The dramatic fall from grace of *enfant terrible* John Galliano, head designer of Givenchy and then Christian Dior — he hurled anti-Semitic insults in Paris two years ago — is just one of the many colorful stories you'll find in the fashion industry, famously filled with prima donnas, giant egos, and a collection of the world's most creative talent. Some of these tales will be up on screen during the first **Miami Fashion Film Festival**, from **Thursday, September 12, through Sunday, September 15**. There will be documentaries (including *God Save My Shoes*, described as a journey into women's psyches and their shoe closets), some classics, and new features such as the closing night *Runways and Bunk Beds*. The films will unspool at O Cinema in Wynwood (90 NW 29th St.). For more information, see to www.miafff.com.

Ballet Gone Global

Pedro Pablo Peña and his annual **International Ballet Festival**, now in its 18th year, have become staples in the cultural fabric here, with the fest usually being the first performance event of the season. This year's festival, running **through Sunday, September 8** at various locations, includes a film series, workshops, and of course, performances from an international array of principal dancers from Argentina, Brazil, France, Hungary, and other countries. The festival's closing gala performance will take place at 5:00 p.m. at the Fillmore Miami Beach at the Jackie Gleason Theater (1700 Washington Ave.). Tickets range from \$25 to \$45. Go to www.internationalballetfestival.org.

Painting Outside the Lines

After Fidel Castro took power, art in Cuba underwent a transformation, with outside influences discouraged and certain styles mandated in schools. Nevertheless, during the 1960s, artists continued to push the boundaries and produce works that challenged the new doctrines. One such artist

was Antonia Eiriz, whose provocative style of painting influenced future artists on the island, many of whom now reside here in Miami. MDC Museum of Art and Design (in the Freedom Tower at 600 Biscayne Blvd.) is presenting the first retrospective of Eiriz's work, **A Painter and Her Audience**, opening on **Friday, September 13**. It will include not only her paintings, but works from other artists such as Ana Mendieta, Glexis Novoa, and Tomás Sánchez. E-mail museum@mdc.edu.

Clean Your Beach, People!

There is nothing more horrifying than arriving at the beach, gazing at the turquoise waters, then spotting trash washing up on the sand. (Okay, maybe also seeing that guy who most definitely should not be wearing a Speedo. That's pretty horrifying, too. But we digress...) Grab some gloves and a bucket and join in the annual **Miami-Dade Coastal Cleanup**, being held at numerous spots across the county on **Saturday, September 21**. The clean-up fun starts at 9:00 a.m. Dress appropriately. For sites and details, go to www.miamidadecoastalcleanup.org.



Miami's Best Bar Crawl

The Brickell neighborhood has provided dramatic skyline shots of Miami for decades, going back to *Miami Vice* days. But the burst of high-rises and development makes it almost unrecognizable from even ten years ago. Now, HistoryMiami's **Brickell to Tobacco Road Walk** will give you a ground-level feel for the transformation. Starting at 7:00 p.m. on **Saturday, September 28**, tour guide Michael Perlman takes you through the gleaming new edifices to point out the historic remnants, ending up at that ancient (okay, 1912) monument, Tobacco Road. Tour costs \$20 for members, \$30 for nonmembers. E-mail citytours@historymiami.org or call 305-375-1621.

Sounds from All Around

The first **Miami World Music Festival** last year hit a high note, and now it's back for a second year at the FIU Wertheim Concert Hall (11200 SW 8th St.). Running from **Thursday, September 19, through Sunday, September 22**, it doesn't get more "world" than this. The fest starts off with a mix of classical guitar and a jazz trio performing compositions from Frenchman Claude Bolling, adds in some Spanish and Cuban music, highlights local Afro-roots drum ensemble Venus Rising, and finishes off with classical raga music from India. (Whew! Are we home yet?) Tickets range from \$25 to \$35. For details see www.miamiworldmusicfestival.com.

Salman Rushdie Spotted in Miami

The Miami Book Fair International will celebrate its 30th year this November, and to mark the occasion will host celebrity readings over three months. On **Thursday, September 26**, at 7:30 p.m., **Salman Rushdie** will talk about his memoir, *Joseph Anton*, with Books and Books founder Mitchell Kaplan. Writing in the third person, Rushdie recounts his life, including the fatwa by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calling for his death. (Joseph Anton was the name Rushdie used while in hiding.) At the Chapman Center, Building 3, second floor, of MDC's Wolfson Campus (300 NE 2nd Ave.). Tickets are required. Go to www.booksandbooks.com.

MOCA Goes Techno

Twentieth-century art was profoundly influenced by technology and the rapid changes it created. This was true in both subject matter and form (the emergence of video and photography, for example). Turns out the 21st Century is no different. In his first show as curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (770 NE 125th St.),



Brazilian Music Man

Before he was 20, while still a Sao Paulo university student in 1995, André Mehari won competitions for best original Brazilian pop music and best classical music. Two years later he was playing jazz piano professionally and, on his first CD, played all 26 instruments himself. Yes, he is a prodigy, and now also a rising Brazilian star. He'll combine all of his styles and musical talents for the **Activate: MD-Culture** evening during DWNTWN Art Days. The performance is at 6:00 p.m. on **Friday, September 20**, at the Freedom Tower (600 Biscayne Blvd.). Admission is free. Presented by MDC Live Arts. Go to www.mdclivearts.org.

Alex Gartenfeld brings together a number of international artists inspired by "the ideologies that bind human users and technological objects," and adds some seminal works from the 1970s, to create a thematic continuum. Titled "**Love of Technology**", the exhibit opens on **Friday, September 27**. Visit www.mocanomi.org.

Reveling in the Tribe

The Miccosukee Indian tribe, an offshoot of the Creek nation, began living in the Everglades in the 19th Century, when a small group fled to the swamp to escape the pursuing U.S. Army. Since then they have steadfastly maintained their traditions and culture, which will be celebrated during **American Indian Day** at the Miccosukee Indian Village (Mile Marker 70 along the Tamiami Trail), from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on **Saturday, September 28**. Details at www.miccosukee.com.

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

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Bartering in Miami

100 Block of NE 82nd Street

Guess being in your front yard in Miami opens you up for interaction with others. If this were a small town, one might get invited in for coffee. Not here. A random person entered the owner's yard and asked for five dollars. The owner refused, but the stranger entered his home anyway though the open door and took the owner's laptop. Guess they couldn't renegotiate at this point. The thief left, likely unwilling to take that five-dollar gratuity. He was later arrested but told cops he'd pawned the computer. Bet he got more than five bucks, though the bail money likely makes it a bad business deal.

Even Our Criminals Are Getting Old

1000 Block of NE 83rd Street

You never knows who will victimize us. There's the image of the young, fit hoodlum who runs like the wind and will take your possessions in a flash. In this incident, we learn that our hoodlums are reaching the age where they're slowing down. This criminal entered the children's room but apparently found nothing to his liking — no items were taken. In the process, the subject dropped a heart monitor at the scene. Guess we need to rethink our image of the Miami criminal — perhaps a lumbering, middle-age diabetic with weight issues and a bad hip? The fact that nothing was taken

and evidence was left behind tells us this perp needs to think about a retirement plan.

Local Drunk's Last Stand

601 Biscayne Blvd.

Everyone likes to go out on occasion, even if they have no friends and must fly solo. Such is the plight of the active alcoholic. A lush ran up \$226 on his bar bill but, like most deadbeat drunks, couldn't pay the check. Opportunities were given to him to settle the bill, but the heavily intoxicated man didn't care. Police were summoned and arrested him, so he likely spent the night retching in the toilet at the county jail. Maybe he'll make some new friends there and they'll foot the bill during his next jaunt.

The Blame Game Goes On

1600 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

Weddings can be festive events. At this special occasion, a woman happily took



pictures of her friend's special day with her iPhone. She took countless pictures and set her phone on a table after each photo. By the end of the night, after composing an impressive album, she looked down at the same table and her phone was gone. She informed management and was told, "It must be a guest, as it can't be staff." This

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angered the woman, who called police. The hotel also filed a report for the missing phone. Maybe the bride and groom grew tired of that tacky woman with the iPhone and *ordered* it taken?

Too Good for Pennies

NE 61st Street and Biscayne Boulevard
Officials became curious when the streetlights stopped working at this location. They discovered that 900 feet of copper wire was stolen from three poles during the night. Copper theft is actually on the rise in Miami; copper is now considered a precious metal by many gang members. While the government stopped using it in pennies in 1982, it's apparent that copper has become the new gold.

A Fiendly Gathering of Friends

2200 Block of NE 4th Avenue
When invited over a friend's home, one is sometimes introduced to others in attendance. Who doesn't welcome an opportunity to meet people and possibly network for a better life? At this gathering, the invitee placed her purse down, only to have someone take her wallet. To make matters more insulting, her car keys were

thrown under the couch. When she told her hostess that someone stole her wallet, the hostess not only wasn't surprised but knew it happened. Guess this is to be expected at her informal parties. Police were called, so we guess this friendship isn't moving forward.

Lame Excuses Do Not Impress Officers

700 Block of NE 127th Street
Police were dispatched to a residence in reference to a burglary in progress. Two suspects were seen jumping a fence in an effort to elude police. They were stopped immediately. Police then entered the home and found two more suspects. While the first two tried to leave knowing they'd just broken into a home that wasn't theirs, these two both offered, "We were going to this house in order to stay out of the rain." One even said he'd received a text message on his phone offering to hang out at a certain location. Surely, police would understand these excuses? All four were arrested; one was transported to Jackson Hospital because of injuries sustained during the break-in. Not a great night for these nitwits.

Working Through Relationship Problems

15000 Block of Royal Oaks Lane
Friends fight at times, usually over what movie to see or what coffee shop to visit. In North Miami, things can escalate. Police responded to what's known as a strong-arm robbery. A friend grabbed a cell phone from another friend. When the victim called police, police interviewed the thief and she justified her behavior by claiming she'd been disrespected. She admitted to throwing the phone off the balcony, destroying it. She even took \$100 from her friend for good measure. But like true friends, they worked it out. The friend who took the phone wrote a \$60 check to pay for her bad moment of judgment. We guess the other \$100 was forgiven. Charges will not be filed as they managed to work it out — until next time, when guns will likely be introduced into the relationship.

Not So Progressive in This Town

NE 6th Street and N. Miami Avenue
Future defendant was seen smoking what appeared to be a marijuana

cigarette. He had another one behind his ear. He was approached by police and arrested for his public 420 moment. He responded by stating, "What's the big deal, it is legal in other states!" That is true, young man, but wacky weed in Miami is still going to get you in "Crime Beat."

Be Prepared for Any Type of Theft

200 Block of NE 57th Street
In this town, people seem to steal for any reason. Televisions, jewelry, and all things Apple (or displaying the name Michael Jordan) seem to excite our criminal brethren most, but at this location, the victim has had to deal with ongoing mango theft. Yes, these promising mangos have drawn the attention of Miami thugs. During this incident, the owner had to chase two men from her backyard. We hesitate to publish her address for fear of copycats. Mangos have been known to lower cholesterol, so maybe the older criminal in the earlier report will refocus his energies on jobs such as this. We hope not.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Biscayne National Park is a world-class ecosystem in Miami's backyard

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Pole dancing in a national park may sound illegal, or just plain wrong, but it has happened — assuredly, only in Miami. Yes, I wrote “pole dancing.” Not in Yosemite. Not in the Grand Canyon. Only in Miami — the place with the highest concentration of national parks in the nation.

Expect similar misconduct to happen again in mid-October during Columbus Day weekend, when hordes of party people steer their boats into Biscayne National Park. A press release from last year's so-called regatta event summarized it this way: “There were no deaths this year (six people have died at the event in the past ten years), and few injuries. Over 200 law enforcement cases were made over the weekend. Notable incidents include: A woman who was removed by helicopter after falling on her chin while pole dancing.”

Those statements come directly from the U.S. National Park Service, although they sound like excerpts from the newly dubbed fiction genre Florida glare. Under the blazing sun, Miamians are visiting a national park to drink, strip,

and party themselves to death.

This is not Everglades National Park. This is the largest marine park in the system, and it is clearly visible from downtown Miami. This is Biscayne National Park, the underwater wonderland that, to quote Rodney Dangerfield, can't get no respect.

“It's not all that surprising,” says park superintendent Brian Carlstrom. “Many people in urban areas think it's their backyard park, and don't recognize it has national significance.”

Most people in Miami-Dade County remain unaware of the park's existence, according to surveys, and the literature for tourists does little to celebrate Miami-Dade as the only county in the nation to contain two national parks. Biscayne National Park is younger and smaller than its cousin a few miles away, Everglades National Park, but it deserves to be equally appreciated and at least visited by every schoolchild.

What Everglades National Park is to sawgrass, Biscayne National Park is to seagrass.

Because most of Biscayne National Park is underwater in the Atlantic Ocean and southern Biscayne Bay, it functions primarily as a boater's paradise. The closest park boundary to urban Miami lies just offshore of Key Biscayne and includes



Divers on Elkhorn Reef, one of several thriving reef systems in the park.

Biscayne National Park



Florida International University students: Many knew little of the park.

BT photo by Jim W. Harper

Stiltville, the collection of historic, dazzling structures that hover over the water.

Our park's southern border extends to Key Largo, and its area of 172,000 acres is nearly as wide as it is long. Essentially the park covers an aquatic transition zone where the mainland dissolves into the archipelago of the Florida Keys.

The great news for any visitor, by land or sea, is that Biscayne National Park is completely free. The bad news for landlubbers is that access is restricted to the end of the road in Homestead, past the speedway and on the doorstep of the Turkey Point Nuclear Plant.

“The main entrance is a little bit remote from the populace of Miami,” admits Carlstrom. Long-distance cyclists zip along the mostly empty roads around the park.

If you hit the nuclear plant's cooling canals, you've gone too far. Despite the hike, definitely plan a day trip to visit to the park's headquarters and its Dante Fascell Visitor Center at Convoy Point. Scuba, snorkeling, and other adventures can be booked with the park's concession, called Biscayne Underwater, and

you can rent kayaks, go fishing, and enjoy a barbecue beside the bay.

The park's wildlife makes it truly world-class. Its cross section of ecosystems qualifies it as one of the most diverse places on earth because it gathers the flora and fauna of coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and hardwood hammocks. Here the Gulf Stream's tropical waters collide with the tip of a continent.

Camping is currently available only on Boca Chita Key and costs \$20 per night for a boat slip and primitive site. The much larger Elliott Key is closed owing to damage sustained during last year's Superstorm Sandy.

The uninhabited islands of Biscayne National Park bathe in tranquility and offer a striking contrast to the bustle of the main Florida Keys. Elliott Key is expected to reopen next year, and you should put this landmark on your Florida bucket list.

Several years ago I took my dog, Lucy, camping on Elliott Key for a father-doggie bonding experience. It was one of the best excursions I've experienced in Florida, and at home on the mantel shines a photograph of this trip

BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK

Park Rating

9700 SW 328th St.
Homestead, FL 33033
305-230-1144
Hours: 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Picnic tables: Yes
Barbecues: Yes
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: No
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



Biscayne National Park



BT photo by Jim W. Harper



Biscayne National Park

The Dante Fascell Visitor Center offers a museum, films, and a gallery.

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

Columbus Day Regatta, also known as the world's rowdiest floating party.

showing the sunset glowing behind my furry black angel.

This year I went snorkeling on coral reefs within the park with students from Florida International University, many of whom knew little about the park, despite being long-time residents of greater Miami. They saw that the two corals on the U.S. endangered species list were thriving within this section of the park, marking Biscayne National Park as a major refuge for the embattled builders of Caribbean reefs.

In addition to natural reefs, the park contains six major wrecks within its maritime heritage trail.

While federal and state regulations apply here as they do everywhere, Biscayne National Park remains mostly wide open for fishing and other forms of recreation. Attempts in recent years to restrict fishing have met with strong resistance.

On the proactive side, the park offers free "fisheries awareness classes" in English or Spanish throughout the year.

"We work with boaters to better inform them about fishing in the park," said superintendent Carlstrom.

Access to the park is improving. Starting in November, the first public transportation to Biscayne National Park will begin with a free trolley from Homestead that will shuttle visitors to the park, and eventually into Everglades National Park as well.

As of last year, the park began hosting naturalization ceremonies for new citizens.

Biscayne National Park offers wonder both above and below the water's surface, and it deserves more attention — and more respect.

Party boaters in Biscayne Bay, listen up: Step away from the pole, turn off the striptease music, and instead start singing "America the Beautiful." This place is a national treasure.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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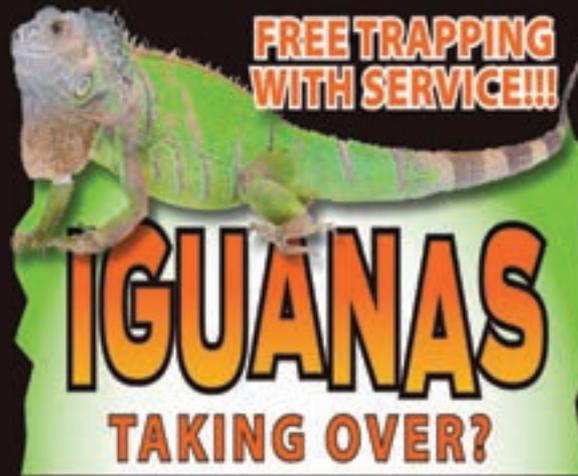
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A Kitty for Your Thoughts

These days, there's an Internet cat to capture your every mood

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

Cats. They are everywhere. They are on my legs as I type this. A lot of them. Doing somersaults through outer space. They are on my nails, too. One is grumpy. The other one has a Pop-Tart for a body.

Why is this? It's because, besides the fact I have a penchant for colorful, wacky designs, cats are the new black. In the world of techno nerd-generated animal merchandise, cats are the new fad.

Fads come and go. Trends, on the other hand, hang around in popular culture much longer than fads, says Daniel Levine, director of the Avant-Guide Institute. Animal imagery = super trend. Cats gone viral = fad.

Indeed, while certain animals enjoy their 15 minutes on clothing, slapped on car bumpers, and adorning tweens' backpacks, the cat slinked in and transformed its image from an animal associated with the socially unacceptable "crazy cat lady" who creates puffy-paint-decorated sweat-shirts to an icon even the snottiest hipster is proud to post across her chest.

How did this happen?
"From a trends perspective, cats are surprisingly enduring," Levine says. "It all started with the LOLcat meme back in 2005, which gained much of its traction through the weekly ritual of 'Caturday' on 4chan and 'I Can Has Cheezburger.'" (For the uninitiated, those are Internet bulletin boards and blogs.)

Cats apparently are cooler than dogs or any other animal. At least, one animal



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

behaviorist told me that. I'm not going to tell you who that person is, because she would be forced into a secret life, always looking over her shoulder, for fear the Dog People might seek revenge in most unsavory ways.

Mark Venezia is vice president of sales at Spreadshirt, an e-commerce platform for the creating, selling, and buying of ideas consumers love. He says

cat-themed merchandise has grown from four percent in 2009 to ten percent currently, and that store sales are up by 50 percent. "People love their cats and all things cat-related, as noted by Mashable geeks, independents, and hipsters," Venezia notes. "They prefer felines to pooches for their inscrutable vibes."

I considered the Hip Cat notion. It makes sense. Cats are known for their

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independent streaks. Hipsters think they are independent, or at least independent thinkers. Cats require less attention than dogs. Hipsters are fine with that because they can't be bothered with adhering to a strict feeding and bathroom break schedule (for their pets).

I mean, all that independent thinking requires freedom. Hipsters can't be expected to show up at an exact place at an exact time. Ever. That might retard their creative process, not to mention their tattoo and piercing schedules and beard-shaping sessions. And we can't have that, now can we? Plus hipsters surf the Web. A lot.

Cats also have a history within popular culture of being, well, not always overly friendly. Cartoon-strip protagonist Garfield rolled his eyes into the hearts of the general public. But that was the slow, swinging 1970s for you. These days we don't tolerate any of that comic-strip crap. That requires drawing and more than one caption, which requires imagination and, perhaps more important, time. And ain't nobody got any of that.

But that's okay, because today we have Grumpy Cat. Whereas Garfield was more

of a sarcastic character, Grumpy Cat is grumpy to the point of being mean. She's also not a fictitious, illustrated character, but a real cat. And naturally, as a product of this social-media-dominated time, Grumpy Cat is a meme. Grumpy Cat (her real name is Tardar Sauce) is also afflicted with an under bite and feline dwarfism, which alter her facial expression into one of utter disgust. A true sourpuss.

Usually there is a photo of Grumpy Cat, appearing fed up, in the center of a caption stating what Grumpy Cat thinks of you. It's never pretty. And while Garfield became famous for lines such as "I'd like mornings better if they started later," Grumpy Cat built her notoriety on the updated equivalent: "You hate Mondays? I hate everything." Incidentally, there is a meme featuring Garfield that states, "Garfield was a Grumpy Cat before it was cool."

Grumpy Cat resonated so well with the public that her human parent had to take a leave of absence from her day job at Red Lobster to manage Grumpy Cat's schedule, according to her Wikipedia entry. Grumps now boasts her own line of merchandise, including apparel and coffee mugs sold online and at Hot Topic

(all which had earned Grumps a tidy sum in the low six figures by May), and is about to launch a line of bottled coffee called "Grumppuccino," with the accompanying slogan: "It's Awfully Good."

Grumppuccino competes with Starbucks' prepackaged Frappuccino products, offering the same flavors (coffee, vanilla, mocha) and size. On its Website, it takes swipes at Starbucks by featuring an "X" over a Starbucks Frappuccino bottle. In true Grumpy Cat style, of course, Grumppuccino also takes swipes at itself in memes. One states, "Grumppuccino Is Awfully Good." Except the last word is crossed out, so the message reads, "Grumppuccino Is Awful."

Grumpy Cat also has a book and calendar out, and a movie in the works. But let's move on.

Before Grumpy Cat's emergence in 2012, there was another Internet sensation, Nyan Cat, which started as a doodle that went viral as a music video in 2011. Nyan is the Un-Grumpy Cat. In fact Nyan is so happy he doesn't mind having a Pop-Tart body that propels him through the galaxy, trailing rainbows. Nyan is popular on commerce craft sites, such as Etsy.com, but hasn't moved

merchandise like Grumps.

However! Rising from the ashes of Nyan we have Taco Cat, collectively, an assortment of bemused cats peering out from hard-shell tacos. Here's something else: Taco Cat is often in space. In fact many hipster cats are flying through the cosmos lately, sans taco or burrito shell (Purrito Cat), and not as peanut butter and jelly sandwich innards, either. (Yes, that image is available, too.) Another Nyan-inspired fad? Perhaps.

Popular Grumpy and Nyan Cat predecessors such as Garfield and, from Asia, Hello Kitty and Maneki-neko, or "Lucky Cat," remain earthbound. So what gives? Levine suggests that the galaxy may be a fad that marketers are using to push their brand. Except that the concept of "the galaxy" itself is popular, as seen on leggings and in nail art.

Maybe it's a Dr. Who thing. After all, Dr. Who, the British TV time traveler, is a current fad. And what does the good doctor use to explore the universe? Something called a Tardis! Coincidence? I don't know. Grumpy Cat might. But she'd rather die than tell you.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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The Killer Hurricane of 1926

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the BT

The mighty hurricane of 1926 smashed into Miami and other parts of South Florida with winds in excess of 130 miles per hour, leaving mass destruction in its wake.

The storm struck on September 17, sweeping over Miami Beach before slamming the Miami mainland just before daybreak. It caught many Miamians by surprise. Worse, a large number of people ventured outdoors as the storm's eye

passed overhead and the air was calm. When the hurricane's powerful winds returned, many were trapped on today's MacArthur Causeway and the SW 2nd Avenue bridge over the Miami River.

More than 100 people lost their lives and thousands were left homeless. Few parts of the Greater Miami area were spared as the storm cut a wide swath through the area.

The accompanying photograph shows the busy intersection of 12th Avenue and W. Flagler Street, in the Riverside neighborhood (today's East Little



Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, #2003-275-2

Havana) on September 18, presumably a short time after the storm left the area.

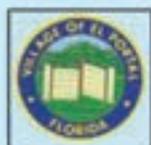
In addition to the flooding, observe the fallen utility pole, the trees in the upper part of the photograph shorn of their leaves, and the wood-frame buildings surprisingly still standing. The people in the left-hand corner of the photograph are standing on an overhang at the second level of today's Beramar Apartments.

Greater Miami slowly dug itself out of the devastation left by the storm. Its comeback was inhibited by the

economic crisis that settled over the area with the collapse of the real estate boom earlier in 1926. The national economic depression following the collapse of the stock market in October 1929 only exacerbated the situation.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL NOTICE OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

Please take notice that on September 24, 2013 at 7:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be reached on the agenda, in the Village Hall of El Portal, located at 500 Northeast 87th Street, El Portal, Florida, the proposed ordinance with title stated below will be considered for enactment by the Mayor and Village Council of the Village of El Portal.

The proposed ordinance may be inspected by the public at the Village Hall and interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard in respect to the proposed ordinance, the title of which is as follows:

Ordinance No. 2013-003

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The Fight Against Mites

With some plant species, keeping pests in check is as easy as peeling off a few leaves

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

Gingers and related species have always been one of my favorite plant families. It would be difficult to find another family of plants that has as much color and varied floral structures as this one, closely related to bananas, costus species, and heliconias. At Parrot Jungle, I grew dozens of species of these striking plants.

It is from this group of plants that I got my first real insight into integrated pest management. My desire to cultivate plants in a pesticide- and fungicide-free manner had been piqued years before, but I was not sure how to go about it in the garden I had been tasked to cultivate.

My first success was with bananas, controlling the red spider mites that I had to spray every couple of months with a very powerful pesticide (or miticide, to be exact). It seemed that, during the warmer months of the year, the underside of the lowest leaves would get the first infestation of mites and, if I was not careful, the mites would eventually cover all of the foliage, particularly the undersides of leaves, in a week or so.

One day it dawned on me that, whenever I checked for spider mites, I would automatically grab the lowest, and oldest, leaf on the plant and lift it up to look at its underside. This went for all of the gingers and related species.

Well, what happens when a leaf begins to die on a plant? The plant

first mobilizes nutrients in that leaf so those nutrients can be moved to actively growing locations like new leaves, fruit, or flower, before that leaf drops off. This is why you should never remove too many older green leaves or fronds from palm trees. You are removing critical nutrients from that palm and will actually cause a deficiency. But that does not seem to be the case with gingers and related plants.

I started removing the two or three oldest leaves from the bananas that I was growing just before they started to change in color from their normal green to a slightly yellowish green. By removing these older, or senescing, leaves, I found that I was actually removing a source of food from the spider mites and, after a couple of months, I no longer had to spray for the mites. It seemed the mite populations thrived on the nutrient-rich older leaves, but had difficulty living on newer leaves that had nutrients in a less available form.

By the time I left the Parrot Jungle site to work full-time at Jungle Island, I had completely stopped spraying for spider mites on bananas (after having sprayed these plants quite intensively for 14 years).

This method of removing the oldest leaves also worked on other species of related plants like heliconias, costus, birds of paradise, and canna lilies. I was really proud of myself. What's more, I no longer had to purchase very expensive miticides.



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

The torch ginger is a great addition to any garden, large or small.

Still, during the few years that I was practicing this method, I was very concerned about the effect removing still green but yellowing foliage might have on the flowering and fruiting of these plants. Perhaps because this group of plants is monocarpic — meaning they flower only one time and then die — I could not discern any effect on the frequency of flowering on any single species of plant, or on the size of the hands of bananas.

I was soon removing all of the lowest leaves on all of the ginger plants and associated relatives. This method also worked really well on the red-flowered canna lilies some longtime Parrot Jungle visitors may remember on the corner of Red Road and SW 111th Street. This corner of plants had been the most sprayed group of plants at Parrot Jungle from the time I first planted them in the early 1980s till the time I left the park.

During my travels in Malaysia and Borneo, I have had the opportunity to

view and photograph many species that we rarely see here in the states. The photo that accompanies this article is a torch ginger, *Tapeinochilos ananassae*, that I found growing on the island of Borneo. This is a plant that has foliage that can grow up to ten feet tall. The flower, or more correctly, the inflorescence, grows on its own stalk out of the ground up to several feet and can last a couple of months before it discolors and falls apart.

I have grown torch gingers in large containers successfully. The foliage and floral stalk will not be so tall, but will be more compact, perfect for a small garden or balcony.

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

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Other Parents Are Awful

Insecure about your child-rearing skills? Just take a look at some of the maniacs out there

By Crystal Brewe
BT Contributor

I'm not sure this makes me a better mom, but I have found some very entertaining and like-minded parents on podcasts. On a recent listen, I came across a Drew Magary piece called "The Hater's Guide to Other Parents." I almost wet myself laughing while simultaneously getting whiplash from vigorously nodding in agreement with his analysis.

Like Magary, I will admit I am not the world's best parent. I make mistakes. I make bad decisions. I am human, which means I also like to judge people, wrong as that is. It is embedded in our DNA, though, and sometimes agreeing with your spouse that "Johnny's mom just sucks" is... well... liberating.

With that in mind, I want to say thank you to Magary for identifying these ten types of parent who make me feel like a leather-pant-wearing mommy rock star by comparison (and also, like I want to call Child Protective Services on them):

That lady who drops her kids off at the playground and then goes for a run. My thoughts: This is not the 'burbs in 1981, lady. That is a bad idea. There are people like Ariel Castro and Snaggletooth staked out, waiting for your Lululemon-wearin' butt to run off, so they can swipe your kid.

Parents who refuse to wipe the boogers of their kid's face. My thoughts: I have been chasing boogers for nine years now, and they can be downright smarter than me, tougher than me, and faster than me. I'm not a fan of passing out the freakin' bird flu. On the other hand, there are sometimes more pressing matters to worry about, and frankly, wouldn't *you* rather have boogers than a raw schnoz?

The "misery parents" who are so anxious they want others to share their panic. My thoughts: They find me at PTA meetings and birthday parties just to tell me that the BPA levels in Ikea's cups are off the charts, or that a neighbor's kid got ringworm from another neighbor's cat. I know some of these parents intimately. Hats off to you, Debbie Downer.

The interrogator who asks infinite questions about sleeping habits, nutritional habits, and even educational plans — sometimes before you've given birth. My thoughts: Just. Stop. It.

People who have extended fights with their kids in public. My thoughts: Trust me, my four-year-old can be the demon spawn, and I have gone off my rocker in the playback reel of bad parenting highlights, but I can't imagine shaking my baby in the entrance of Target, yelling, "Why didn't you tell mommy you had to pee?" while my kid



pees all over the floor and screams in horror. This really happened. Yesterday, in fact. Kudos, lady. You just made the all-star team.

Aggressive drivers in the school parking lot. My thoughts: OMG, get off your phone and pay attention, Stacey's mom! Yes, I *did* just honk at you. You almost hit the new kindergarten teacher as you barreled that Escalade into the roundabout!

Anything-Goes Parents. My thoughts: I admit it, the parent in category number three got to me. I *don't* want my kid playing in the dirty mud outside the park because I'm afraid she's right about the sewage backing up in the floodwater. Thirty minutes of mud-pie making isn't worth Hep B. But what harm can come from letting kids be kids sometimes? I come from a time and place where kids had the freedom to jump in puddles, play baseball in the street, and walk to the park by themselves. But then again, we didn't have car seats or sunscreen.

"I'm just an #%shole who's on the phone the whole time. My thoughts: As I write this, my phone is nestled comfortably in my lap. I grow anxious when it

isn't near me. Addiction is hard, but your kids need to know you like to hang with them periodically. "Mommy, watch this!" need not be constantly interrupting your Facebook post about *Top Chef Masters*.

Parents who want their children to have "every advantage" possible. My thoughts: Chill out. Your kid is going to have gray hair by the age of eight at this rate. Putting her in karate, Chinese, and paying for the "private" gifted testing isn't going to change the fact you need to pay more attention to what *you* are doing to contribute to the success of your child.

Ariel Castro My thoughts: I think Magary made an interesting decision by ending his list with this one, but this dude scares me, too. These people exist. This guy raised several of his own kids, who seem to have ended up normal (but clearly hadn't visited his home for years).

I often find myself feeling pride in my parenting mediocrity because of some of the things I see my fellow moms and dads do. This is why it's okay that Magary says, "Other parents are the worst!"

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I Do, We Can

A surprise wedding ceremony serves as a reminder that justice in all things is possible

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Tomorrow all of your dreams could come true. Your neighbors could spontaneously come visiting with offers of sugar, flour, and eternal friendship. Your commute to work could dissipate into nothing, and road rage could become a memory. Miami could be pronounced the greenest city in the world.

Peace on earth is possible.

With all the apocalyptic movies feeding our imaginations and all the scientific studies documenting the environment's rapid decline, it seems illogical to welcome the future, especially the future of the city predicted to lose the most to a rising sea. Yet we must remember not only the mistakes of history, but also the victories, when people did the right thing and created a better world. We have to hold on to hope.

Civil rights. World wars. The American Revolution. People have demonstrated over and over again they can band together and defeat the enemy — especially when the enemy seems overwhelming.

Let's be clear. The enemy of climate change and sea-level rise is overwhelming to the point of being nearly incomprehensible. It will defeat and drown Miami and most of Florida if we continue with business as usual. The

equation is as simple as one minus one. We, the people of Earth, owe a huge debt of fuel-based pollution that has been accumulating since the industrial revolution, and this debt must be paid.

Miami may not survive the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise in its current form, but it could transform into something better. Remember when the electricity went out after Hurricane Wilma in 2005, and you actually talked to your neighbors? Traffic halted. Kids rejoiced because they didn't have to go to school. Adults hugged those kids a little tighter. We survived.

This year, and in coming years, we should expect more frequent and more forceful hurricanes. We should expect seawater to ruin our drinking water. With such overwhelming problems caused by a warmer ocean and more disruptive climate, why should I be feeling so hopeful?

I am beyond hopeful, actually, and thinking about miracles, not because of what I know, but because of what I experienced today. I experienced a miracle.

Today I had a surprise wedding. By "surprise" I mean I had no idea it would happen this way, at this time, although I have known the person I wanted to marry for many years. It was like a surprise birthday party — times 1000.

My partner and I were on vacation in Los Angeles, visiting a friend, when



the two of them secretly plotted to bring me to the courthouse on an "errand." Stepping into the courtyard, completely clueless, I saw two attractive men embracing each other and being embraced by family members. Then I saw a line with other couples waiting for the justice of the peace. Then I started crying.

At age 45, having spent more than 18 years with a partner who did not believe in marriage, I had given up on the idea. But this summer a spark of hope was rekindled by the Supreme Court decision that expanded gay marriage. In the back of my mind, I thought that, one day, I would get married in Florida; probably around the time I was ready to retire, when I would strap my partner into a wheelchair and roll him into the courthouse against his will. But still, it would happen.

Instead he planned a vacation, planned a wedding, and surprised me with something life-altering. Same-sex marriage and my surprise wedding may seem to have nothing to do with environmental justice per se, but justice is justice. If we can defeat ignorance and hate, we can certainly defeat carbon dioxide.

Make no mistake, the changing climate and our response are the grand

issues of our era. Future history books will have a sidebar about the emergence of gay marriage, but whole chapters will be devoted to the way a changing climate rearranged human existence itself.

Miami is one of the great battlegrounds in the war against pollution. It could sink, as predicted, or it could rise from its waterlogged ashes. It could become a true community and a new paradigm. It could become the place the rest of the world points to and says, "Look, if they can do it, we can do it, too."

Some days I give up on the dream of a healthy and clean future, free of pollution. I stop hoping and believing that it can happen. But not tomorrow. Tomorrow I will wake up with hopes and dreams intact, and I will believe that a miraculous, earth-saving surprise is just around the corner. I will believe that the good side of history can repeat itself.

Tomorrow could be the day that catches you by surprise. It could be a miracle.

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Unusual Whites That Score Big

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

“H it ’em where they ain’t,” as Wee Willie Keeler once said, is as good advice in wine buying as it is in baseball.

I know, baseball metaphors are as trite as chewing gum commercials — America’s pastime, the boys of summer, a field of green — but nowadays we take our clichés where we can get them.

And besides, in life as well as baseball, hitting the horsehide-covered spheroid to that vacuum-gloved third baseman with a .357 Magnum for an arm will leave you with a batting average lower than Sarah Palin’s IQ.

Anyway, Wee Willie’s point — admittedly extrapolated halfway to Jupiter — is that the best way to get the biggest bang for your bat, and buck, is to play ball in less-crowded territory. When it comes to finding interesting wines at an affordable price — which, after all, is the reason for VINO’s existence — that often means shopping outside the terminally jam-packed Cabernet-Chardonnay-Merlot-Pinot Noir aisles.

Since it’s still hotter than Hades in a blast furnace, with lobster season upon us and stone crab season coming up fast, it seemed a reasonable proposition that this month’s affordable wines be white. And we do have some good ones.

Two excellent examples are the **2012 Chateau Saint-Pierre de Mejans** and

the **2010 Domaine de Pellehaut**. The Saint-Pierre comes from the Luberon region of Provence and is a blend of Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris, and Ugni Blanc, the last being one of the chief grapes used in the production of cognac. It’s a quiet little party for your taste buds, rife with ripe apricot and green apple aromas and flavors, with an earthy edge and pronounced minerality from the region’s limestone-laced soils.

The Pellehaut is definitely something different. Made from six grapes, it fools you with a nose of ripe tropical fruit, only to smack you in the palate with crisp, citrus acidity. Think taking a bite of a ripe, juicy mango that tastes like a bracingly tart pineapple. It may be something of an acquired taste, but it certainly is unusual.

The **2012 Mont Gravet Côtes de Gascogne**, on the other hand, is of much less elaborate pedigree, being 100-percent Colombard. Wine drinkers of a certain vintage may recall domestic “French Colombard” (which translates as “crap”), but this quite appealing wine is nothing like that. It’s got a peachy, almost floral character, with a bit of richness, some soft citrus acidity, and a hint of the diesel aroma exhibited by some Rieslings.

Sticking with France, we come to the **2011 Cave de Tain Marsanne**, another 100-percent varietal, though this one from the northern Rhone Valley. It’s a classic Marsanne, teasing with a creamy, mouth-filling texture and hints of peach

and pear, then satisfying with refreshing lemon-lime-mineral flavors that practically demand to be complemented with a fat mound of stone crab claws.

We’ve all read a lot about Greece lately, most of it not very complimentary. So here’s some good news: **Boutari 2010 Kretikos**. Composed of 70-percent Vilana and 30-percent other varietals even more unpronounceable than the French, it’s a simple, citrusy, mineral-y wine that’s perfect for sitting on some rustic taverna’s little seaside patio, enjoying a handful of olives and infinite views of brilliant-blue water. The Greeks may not be so hot with their finances, but they do know how to live.

Italy’s been in the news a lot, too, and much of it isn’t any happier than the word on Greece. So the hell with it. Pop the cork on a bottle of **Ruffino’s 2011 Orvieto Classico** and tell the world to go screw. It’s a simple wine — a little citrusy, a little herbal, a little earthy, not particularly distinctive, but pleasant enough.

And finally, a wine from California with a French-sounding name: **Ménage à Trois**. And no, it has nothing to do with naughty sex. It’s a lush, fruity ménage of Chardonnay, Moscato, and Chenin Blanc, produced by Napa’s Folie à Deux



At the North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) the Chateau Saint-Pierre sells for \$11.99, the Domaine de Pellehaut for \$8.99, and the Boutari Kretikos for \$10.99. The Ménage à Trois and Mont Gravet are both \$9.99 at the Aventura Whole Foods Market (21105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-682-4400), while the Cave de Tain can be found at the North Miami Beach Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) for \$11.99. As for the Ruffino Orvieto, it clocks in at \$10.19 at Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171 and 1776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-3433).

and as charming as the wine country itself. Think floral and honeysuckle from the Moscato, some ripe pear and apricot from the Chardonnay, a touch of earthy acidity from the Chenin Blanc. Think about it over a platter piled high with stone crab claws or Florida lobster tail fresh off the grill.

That’s a homerun if ever there was one.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Octoberfest in September? Of course!

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Since 1810, September has been the month heralding the start of the world's largest food festival: Oktoberfest, in Munich, September 21 through October 3. Ponder whether beer is indeed food, and other deep questions (such as why Oktoberfest happens mainly *not* in October) at Brickell's first annual Bricktoberfest, September 28, 2:00-11:00 p.m.

Sponsored by **Fado Irish Pub** and Zevents, the beer/food/music fest has three ticket levels: A \$65 ticket includes unlimited free samplings of more than 75 beers and small bites/beer pairings from 2:00-6:00 p.m.; \$25 tickets are party-only, from 6:00 p.m.; and \$95 tickets add early entrance and a VIP tent with more freebie premium brews plus what will doubtless be a much-needed private restroom. For info and limited half-price tix: www.bricktoberfest.com.

Meanwhile, news for the three *pan con bistec* aficionados who haven't heard yet: Finally, four months after what was projected in April as a three-week closing due to an electrical fire, **Enriqueta's Sandwich Shop** (2830 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-4681) reopened in mid-August. Contrary to rumors previously published elsewhere, owners are the same: José Luis Pla and his daughters. Food is the same, too. What's changed: The interior is renovated, should patrons choose to

use it. (Several Cuban friends insist that cafecitos always taste better ordered at a window and consumed in the street.)

News from Liza Meli, former owner of Ouzo's Greek Taverna, whose closing was reported last issue: Expect a seafood eatery in the riverfront space. "I sold it to the 'BigFish' corporation," Meli reports. "The building needed lots of renovations, especially after the Shuckers incident, which they were willing to do." (The outdoor deck at Shuckers collapsed June 13, sending diners into Biscayne Bay, injuring dozens.) But no mourning, fans of Meli's mezes. She's readying a new Greek/Mediterranean tapas/wine bar-market, **Grape & Olive**, for an opening "around November," in a nearby 79th Street space.

OPENINGS

Mina's Mediterraneo (749 NE 79th St., 786-391-0300). Owner Yasmine Kotb's heritage is Egyptian-via-Texas, but the dishes at this newest entry to 79th Street's growing restaurant enclave are inspired by virtually all countries surrounding the sea: Egypt's besara (fava hummus), chicken Milanese, boeuf Bourguignon, Israeli salad, paella, and more. Recipes come from Yasmine's mom Sonia, who's the chef.

KC Healthy Cooking (11900 Biscayne Blvd. #103, 786-502-4193). Though elegant in décor, this globally inspired place is ultra family-friendly, down to chef Jerry Dominique, whose previous experience was 25 years cooking for his own kids.



It's gotta be said: The gorgeously layered/molded quinoa, avocado, and tuna salad sure doesn't look like my mom's tuna noodle casserole. Bet your mamacita never made you blueberry/roasted walnut/chocolate empanadas, either.

Preservation (18250 Collins Ave., 305-974-0273) highlights creative dishes (from Culinary Institute of America-trained chef Ryan Harrison, and owner/partner Nicole Richaud) fusing fresh ingredients with traditionally house-smoked/cured/pickled preserved items. See this issue's new Dining Guide additions for details.

Perfecto GastroBar (1450 Brickell Ave., 305-372-0620). From Barcelona, this hangout features mixed extreme rustic/extreme modern décor, modern music, and traditional tapas — the Spanish kind. Highlight: incomparably fat-marbled, tender yet toothsome, both salty and sweet/nutty 5J jamon Iberico de bellota from acorn-fed pata negra pigs, until mere months ago impossible to find in the USA, but the ultimate in cured hams. Better than the best prosciuttos. In fact, perfecto.

CLOSINGS

At Brickell Key's Mandarin Oriental Hotel, both **Azul** and **Café Sambal** are closed. The indoor/outdoor Asian fusion

Sambal is gone permanently, according to the Mandarin's Heidi Barfels, with the space scheduled for replacement by a new-concept eatery. Top-end Azul, closed to the public owing to renovations, is planned to reopen later in 2013 — but evidently with changes, too. Exec chef Jacob Anaya jumped ship to the bustling Brickell gastro-pub OTC last month, citing excitement at returning to roots-reality and creating his own dishes. Funny. Azul's previous chefs (Michelle Bernstein, Clay Conley, Joel Huff) all mentioned the need to recharge upon departure from corporate fine dining.

Downtown's eclectic Asian hidden hotspot, **Little Lotus**, which opened in 2011 to critical and public acclaim, is gone. Unfortunately, tension with the landlord had been problematic from nearly the start. And after sushi chef Michael Asalie left for Buddha Sushi a year ago, food and service had seriously declined.

Also kaput, without explanations at press time: **Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich** (a North Miami institution since 1954), and **Egyptian Pizza Kitchen** in the Shops at Midtown Miami.

Hungry for more food news? See "Biz Buzz," 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

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

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

Area 31 270 Biscayne Boulevard Way, 305-424-5234

Not that the sleek interior of this seafood restaurant (named for fishing area 31, stretching from the Carolinas to South America) isn't a glamorous dining setting. But we'd eat outside. From the expansive terrace of the Epic condo and hotel on the Miami River, the views of Brickell's high-rises actually make Miami look like a real city. It's hard to decide whether the eats or drinks are the most impressive. The food is impeccably fresh regional fish, prepared in a clean Mediterranean-influenced style. The cocktails are genuinely creative. Luckily you don't have to choose one or the other. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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

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. \$

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; Asianese 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 pit; 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 tasterud-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. \$\$

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 picanha, 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. \$\$\$

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

The South is supposed to be the source of barbecue. But Brother Jimmy evidently didn't hear about that. His signature North Carolina

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL/DOWNTOWN

The Filling Station & Garage Bar 95 SE 2nd St., 786-425-1990

This fun, locally oriented dive, opened in 1994, was hip more than a decade before downtown was. And its 2008 relocation to larger quarters, plus two subsequent expansions, signal that it has more than kept up with the explosion of newer neighborhood hotspots, without pretensions or yuppified prices. On the fresh, hefty hamburgers, true Miami weirdness is displayed in toppings like peanut butter or Nutella. Other standouts: tangy-spicy Buffalo wings; homemade tater tots; the oil pan (fried pickles and onion rings with two sauces); and an ever-changing list of craft beers. \$\$\$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

The Butcher Shop 165 NW 23rd St., 305-846-9120

Unbelievable but true: At the heart of this festive, budget-friendly beer-garden restaurant is an old-school gourmet butcher shop, where sausages from classic (brats, chorizo) to creative (lamb and feta) are house-made, and all beef is certified USDA prime — rarely found at even fancy steakhouses. Take your selections home to cook, or better yet, eat them here, accompanied by intriguing Old/New World sauces, garnishes (like bleu cheese fritters), sides, and starters. Desserts include a bacon sundae. Beer? Try an organic brew, custom-crafted for the eatery. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kouzina Greek Bistro 3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-1825

Across the tracks from Midtown Miami, this hidden-by-hedges spot features a patio with authentically festive ambiance and food by Alexia Apostolou, also authentically Greek but known to locals for her critically acclaimed fare at defunct Ariston. The menu includes many mezze, both traditional (like tsatziki and eggplant spreads) and unusual (bacalao croquettes with garlic purée and roasted beet coulis; sesame-sprinkled manouri cheese envelopes), plus limited entrées highlighted by cheese/herb-crusted lamb at dinner and lunchtime's lamb pita wrap. Don't miss the semolina purée side — heavenly Greek cheese grits. \$\$\$

park 'cue comes from NYC, where the first Brother Jimmy's opened more than 20 years ago. Miami's location is actually the first south of the Mason-Dixon line. But the slow-smoked pulled pork butt tastes righteous — no interfering glop, just hot sauce-pickled vinegar to balance the fat fattiness. There's other 'cue, too, including big (not baby back) ribs, and respectable brisket. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

This quirky café-market's chef/owner is a former smoothie-swilling model who is now into fresh whole foods, and though his eclectic "green gourmet" menu does uniformly reflect his dedication to ecological consciousness, it otherwise could only be described as intensely personal. Offerings are an odd but appealing saint/sinner mix, ranging from healthy pasta/grain salads and homemade-from-scratch snacks (beef jerky, granola) to unique cupcakes featuring nut-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. \$\$\$

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

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Paprika 1624 NE 79th St., 305-397-8777

This exotically decorated restaurant, serving Mediterranean cuisine from North Africa and the Middle East, has several unusual features, including Friday-night belly dancing and a hookah lounge. Food menus also feature appealing, unusual choices (za'atar-spiced seared lamb loin carpaccio with chickpea purée; stuffed boureka puff pastries; mussels in creamy saffron sauce) along with familiar hummus, kabobs, more. Lunchtime sandwich standout: merguez (intensely spiced lamb sausage) with tzatziki, hummus, salad, and fiery harissa sauce, on fresh pita. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Bay Harbor Bistro 1023 Kane Concourse, 305-866-0404

Though small, this ambitious European/American fusion bistro covers all the bases, from smoked salmon eggs Florentine at breakfast and elaborate lunch salads to steak frites at dinner, plus tapas. As well as familiar fare, you'll find atypical creations: caramelized onion and goat cheese-garnished leg of lamb sandwiches; a layered crab/avocado tortino; pistachio-crusted salmon. A welcome surprise: The bistro is also a bakery, so don't overlook the mouthwateringly buttery croissants, plumply stuffed empanadas, or elegant berry tarts and other homemade French pastries. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Preservation 18250 Collins Ave., 305-974-0273

Restaurant trendsetters, anyone with a back-to-the-land ethic, and lovers of food history and culture will especially love this rustic-looking place's focus: proteins and produce, house-preserved via curing, pickling, and smoking. And it's no novelty act. Dishes aren't all preserved, but rather use preserved items to accent fresh ingredients: a Cobb salad with fresh greens, tomato, and egg, plus house-smoked bleu cheese dressing, chicken, and bacon; smoked tomato soup with fresh basil mousse; smoked short rib Benedict for brunch. A variety of jarred preserves and pickles are available retail, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 Manny's Steakhouse, Miami's Chophouse retains basically everything but the famed name (from the original Manny's in Minneapolis), and remains Miami's most intentionally masculine steakhouse. Here, ensconced in your black leather booth, everything is homogenous: 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 Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$

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

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



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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 chorizo 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 105 105 NE 3rd Ave., 305-577-3454

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

db Bistro Moderne 255 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 restatolounges, the "resto" part often gets the short end of the stick. But not at this chic but friendly spot, where Gerardo Barrera, an alumnus of Paris's Le Cordon Bleu, plus his wife Dominique and her brother José Sigona, welcome diners with France's best-known bistro classics: coquilles St. Jacques (tender scallops in mushroom/white wine sauce); a precision-cooked entrecôte rib-eye with Bearnaise or complex Café de Paris butter; crème brûlée (from scratch) or macaron cookies (from heaven). No velvet ropes, and club music isn't cranked till 11:00 p.m. \$\$\$

Edge, Steak & Bar 1435 Brickell Ave., 305-358-3535

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

Elwoods Gastro Pub 188 NE 3rd Ave., 305-358-5222

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

Eos 485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroy Hotel), 305-503-0373

Originally opened by Michelin-starred "New Aegean" chef Michael Psilakis, Eos changed upon the chef's departure into a more familiar Mediterranean resort eatery, minus Greek-inspired innovations. Now inspiration comes mainly from Spain and Italy, with nods to Morocco and Latin America. Best bets include a tasting platter of Spanish cheeses and cured meats; a pistachio-garnished salad featuring Serrano ham, figs, and arugula; crispy parmesan risotto balls with prosciutto and smoked tomato dip; and olive/smoked paprika-rubbed roast chicken. At lunch burgers and upscale sandwiches are added. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 salad (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 "f doe") has a menu reflecting the pub grub found today in Ireland, including solid standards. But most intriguing are dishes mixing classic and contemporary influences, particularly those featuring boxty, a grated/mashed potato pancake. Try corned beef rolls (boxty wraps, with creamy mustard sauce and cabbage slaw), or smoked salmon on mini-boxty "blini," with capers and horseradish sauce. There's a seasonal menu, too. \$\$\$

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 beef-based version of the Russian soup) are as authentic as the kung pao whatever, and as tasty. \$\$\$

Fratelli Milano 213 SE 1st St., 305-373-2300

Downtown isn't yet a 24/7 urban center, but it's experiencing a mini explosion of eateries open at night. That includes this family-owned ristorante, where even newcomers feel at home. At lunch it's almost impossible to resist panini, served on focaccia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pastas like seafood-packed fettuccine 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 Hawa and this new location in the Jade Residences. Golden Pockets (tofu crepes encasing macadamias, avocado, and tuna, crab, shrimp, or Kobe-style beef) are musts. Plus there are unique combos containing maki plus substantial salads, like crunchly 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 uncioered "down shore" food to match: Maine lobster rolls, on broche rather than hot dog rolls; a luxe take on Québécoise poultry (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



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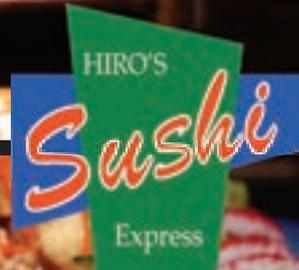
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cured hams are a specialty, as are other pork products on the weekly changing menu, from a roast suckling pig entrée to a fried chorizo and chickpea paella. But seafood is also terrific. Don't miss bacalao-filled piquillo peppers, or two of Miami's 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. Costables 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 (groupier, mahi, snapper, or daily catch), and festive cocktails. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800

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

La Moon

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

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

La Provence

1064 Brickell Ave. 786-425-9003

Great baguettes in the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it's likely not from a restaurant's own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery's café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salad Nicoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$

La Sandwicherie

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

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

Le Boudoir Brickell

188 SE 12th Terr., 305-372-233

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

1 W. Flagler St., 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. \$

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 scrumptious street food. We've happily assembled whole meals of the vegetarian chaat (snacks) alone. And dosai (lacy rice/lentil crepes rolled around fillings ranging from traditional onion/potato to lamb masala or spicy chicken) are so addictive they oughta be illegal. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Miss Yip Chinese Café

900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-0088

Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there's an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$\$\$

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 Anú, 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 Gorenstern 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, nachos. 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 chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862

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

OTC

1250 S. Miami Ave. 305-374-4612

Over-the-counter service usually connotes the classic fast food "slider" experience: both greasburgers and patrons are in and out quickly. At this casually cool gastropub, the counter ordering system encourages the opposite feel, of comfie congeniality; it invites hanging out, just without the fuss of formal dining out – or the expense. Most plates are \$10 or under. Ingredient-driven dishes cover today's favorite food groups (various mac-and-cheeses, variously topped/seasoned fries, and more) with some unusual twists, like a scrumptiously lard-on-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 Elek 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 Thanosios 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 carb 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 flocchi 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 pretty 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 restolounge Joey's, which explains both the stylishness and the menu, highlighted by imaginative wood-oven designer pizzas, plus artisan charcuterie/cheese platters, creative salads, and housemade salted caramel gelato. Not your typical hospital food. Call ahead regarding dinner. At this writing, it's being served Fridays only. \$\$\$

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.

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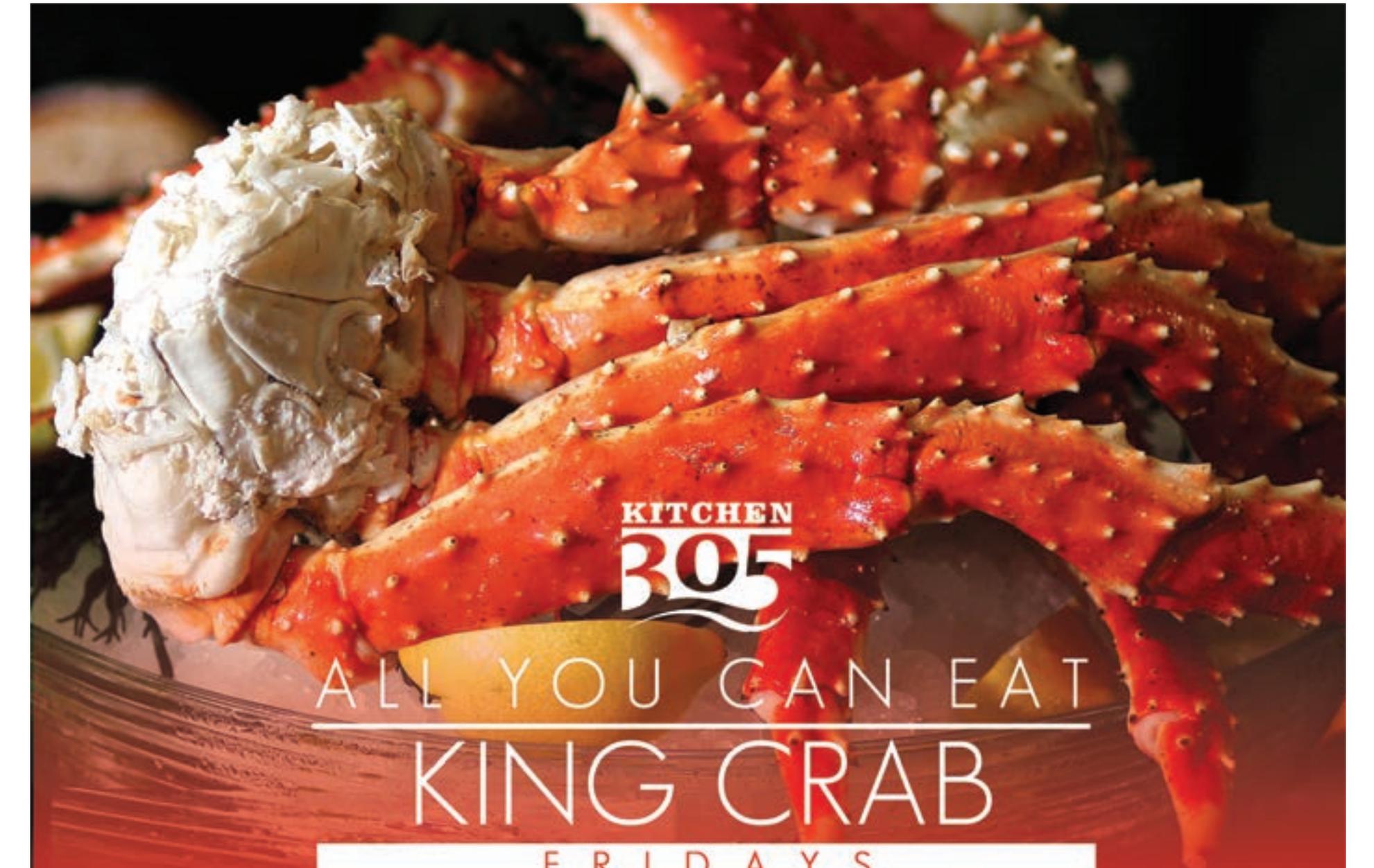
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Main difference: dough, here allowed to rise for four days. The resulting crusts are astonishingly airy, as authentic Roman slices, intended as light street snacks, should be. Toppings, a rotating selection of nearly 30 combinations, are highlighted by quality imported ingredients – not to mention a healthy imagination, as the zucca gialla attests: pumpkin cream, pancetta, smoked scamorza cheese. \$

Porketta 43 NE 3rd Ave., 305-372-0034

Warm, juicy, served with succulent pieces of crisp crackling, herb-stuffed Italian porchetta (pronounced “porketta”) roast, at its best, is hard to find even in much of Italy except during festivals. But every day is a festival here, where the real thing (not the dry deli-style pork roll slices that often pass for porchetta) is featured on a plate with broccoli rabe and cannellini; in the hefty Bombardino sandwich; or in three mini-sandwiches, convenient for sampling the place’s three sauces. Several salads and carpaccios placate porkophobes. \$-\$\$

Prelude Adrienne Arsh Center 1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722

Though the opening of Barton G.’s elegant performing arts center eatery did feature a live giraffe, the food’s actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarragon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraîche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

Raja’s Indian Cuisine 33 NE 2nd Ave., 305-539-9551

Despite its small size and décor best described as “none,” this place is an institution thanks to south Indian specialties rarely found in Miami’s basically north Indian restaurants. The steam-tabled curries are fine (and nicely priced), but be sure to try the custom-made dosai (lacy rice crepes with a variety of savory fillings) and uttapam, thicker pancakes, layered with onions and chilis, both served with sambar and chutney. \$\$

The River Oyster Bar 650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked – fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There’s also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano 900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001

This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that’s haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn’t fear; though nachos aren’t available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between freshly

made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-habanero-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa’s signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

Scalina 315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-789-9933

Comparisons between this new Tom Billante venture and the other (slightly pricier) Italian eatery in the same building are inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC’s Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo’s specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice’s famed fegato (calf’s liver and onions), upscaled with Lucanica sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tarufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

Soya & Pomodoro 120 NE 1st St., 305-381-9511

Life is complicated. Food should be simple. That’s owner Armando Alfano’s philosophy, which is stated above the entry to his atmospheric downtown eatery. And since it’s also the formula for the truest traditional Italian food (Alfano hails from Pompeii), it’s fitting that the menu is dominated by authentically straightforward yet sophisticated Italian entrées. There are salads and sandwiches, too. The most enjoyable place to dine is the secret, open-air courtyard. Alfano serves dinner on Thursdays only to accompany local musicians and artists. \$-\$\$

Sparky’s Roadside Restaurant & Bar 204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877

This cowboy-cute eatery’s chefs/owners (one CIA-trained, both BBQ fanatics nicknamed Sparky) eschew regional purism, instead utilizing a hickory/apple-wood-stoked rotisserie smoker to turn out their personalized style of slow-cooked, complexly dry-rub fusion: ribs, chopped pork, brisket, and chicken. Diners can customize their orders with mix-and-match housemade sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired vinegar/mustard, pan-Asian hoisin with lemongrass and ginger, tropical guava/habanero. Authenticity aside, the quality of the food is as good as most higher-priced barbecue outfits. \$\$\$

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 entrées, all Peruvian, include an elegant aji de gallina (walnut-garnished chicken and potatoes in peppery cream sauce). But the emphasis is on contemporary ceviches/tiraditos (those with velvety aji amarillo chili sauce particularly), plus huge exotic sushi rolls, which get pretty wild. When was the last time you encountered a tempura-battered tuna, avocado, and scallion maki topped with Peru’s traditional potato garnish, huancaína cheese sauce? \$\$

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 Fonzi leaning on a jukebox. What you actually find: hand-formed, hormone-free, 100% Angus patties (or alternatives like veggie burgers, a lightly-breaded chicken Milanesa, 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, 305-372-4110

Back before Miami’s business district had any “there” there, the InterContinental’s original restaurant was an executive lunch/dinner destination mainly by default. This replacement, from restaurant empire-builder Richard Sandoval, brings downtown power dining into this decade. As the name suggests, you can go bullish

with steakhouse fare, including an abbreviated (in variety, not quantity) “rodizio experience.” But the place’s strongest suit is its pan-Latin small plates – upscaled refinements of classic favorites: crisp corn arepas with short rib, guacamole, and crema fresca; fluffier cachapas pancakes with tomato jam; more. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Trapiche Room 1109 Brickell Ave., 305-329-3656

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

Tre Italian Bistro 270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

“Bistro” actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but “restolounge” sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood “bistrolounge.” The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with r’gaw 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-quoted 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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 Worhach and Karina Gimenez serve up warm welcomes and playfully inventive breakfast, lunch, and snack fare: bacon-wrapped egg and cheese cups; pressed Philly steak panini; an elegant yuzu-dressed smoked salmon, grapefruit, avocado, and arugula salad. But the must-eats are sweets, housemade by Worhach, formerly executive pastry chef at the Mansion at Turtle Creek and similar gourmet palaces. One bite of his decadent yet impressively 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 figgiuto: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$\$

Bloom

2751 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5443
Miami's most innovative art district is the perfect setting for this hip hangout, whose mad-genius menu proves that food is indeed one of the creative arts. Reinvented Latin/Asian street foods from chef Ricky Sauri (ex-Nobu) include spicy Spam-topped rice cakes; tuna tartare in seaweed "tacos"; a reina pepiada arepa, whose traditional mild chicken filling is replaced by shredded duck, avocado, tangy-sweet tamarind sauce, and Japanese mayo; an especially elegant Korean bibimbap; a vegan shitate-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 rilletes (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 rilletes, 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 Gully Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no discernible binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414
A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373
Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd. 305-764-3130
After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-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 tuille float instead of the usual goey melt, served on a lacy doily. 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 gooey 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



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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 tamales but with a tuber rather than corn masa dough, or empanadas with savory shrimp stuffing. \$

Egg & Dart 4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022

While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taromosalata (cod rose dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, an often heavy and cloying 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. \$\$\$

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 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, crunchy-crust pizzas like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Carbonara. Pastas are fresh; produce is largely local; the mosaic-centered décor is minimalist but inviting. And no need to be wary of the warehouse district at night: Valet parking is free. \$-\$\$\$

Kouzina Greek Bistro 3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-1825

This festive indoor/outdoor restolounge has native Greek owners – a chef, Alexia Apostolidi, also from Greece but with local critical kudos for her contemporary Greek creations at now-defunct Ariston; and a menu centering on mezes – 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 home-made arepas, with a variety of meat, cheese, and veggie fillings) that isn't out in the boonies – and decidedly isn't a dive. With colorful décor concocted from recycled objects, this space, though small, has truly eclectic, Midtown style. The signature corn cakes, crisped outside and fluffy inside, put sodden super-market specimens to shame. And cachapas (softer, sweeter corn pancakes folded around mozzarella-like fresh cheese) or bollareptas (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, yuppies/yucafed ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café 4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-8080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$-\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill Shops at Midtown Miami Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor 3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

Lost & Found Saloon 185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008

There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crust salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Mandolin Aegean Bistro 4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066

Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MC Kitchen

4141 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-9948

Chef/co-owner Dena Marino calls MC's food "modern Italian" – neither an evocative description nor explanation for why this place is one of our town's hottest tickets. But tasting tells the tale. Marino's food incorporates her entire culinary background, from her Nonna's traditional Italian-American kitchen to a long stint in Michael Chiarello's famed contemporary Californian eatery Tra Vigne, with pronounced personal twists that make eating here uniquely exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's "piadinas," 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 restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatly-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$-\$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mike's at Venetia

555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Morgans Restaurant

28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but *ultimate* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring fries that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crusted and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar

1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000

At NoVe, the restolounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts, Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oak Tavern

35 NE 40th St., 786-391-1818

With a festively lantern-lit oak tree on the outdoor dining patio and stylishly playful lamps mimicking oaks inside, chef/restaurateur David Bracha of River Oyster Bar has transformed a previously cold space to warm. Food is equally inviting. The mostly small-plates seasonal menu roams the globe from supreme Vietnamese bahn mi (with pork belly and foie gras) to down-home buttermilk biscuits with bacon butter, and homemade charcuterie. If available, don't miss Hawaiian-inspired steelhead poke; substituting the salmonlike but more delicate trout for the usual tuna transports this crudo to heavenly heights. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Orange Café + Art

2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070

The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, flocchi pouches filled with pears and cheese), and house-baked pastries. \$

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 soursoy. \$-\$\$

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 Riviera pasta/pizza fast-casual chain, whose concept is pastas, plus pizzas, from around the world – even Italy. Don't expect authenticity from the more exotic toppings; they basically contain one typical ingredient (along with a generic onions/peppers/veg assortment): bean sprouts in Thailand's spaghetti, pineapple in Bali's, curry sauce on India's. Do expect super-fresh sauces, made daily. Friendly staffers and fun. \$\$

Pieducks

3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550

(See Brickell / Downtown listing)

Pride & Joy

2800 N. Miami Ave., 305-456-9548

Behind this Wynwood warehouse façade you'll find pure Southern roadhouse, and the backyard patio is an even more relaxing place to kick back with beer, blues music, and barbecue from pit master Myron Mixon. Oddly, considering Mixon's many BBQ championships, the 'cue can be inconsistent. Our favorite choices: St. Louis ribs, tender without being falling-off-the-bone overcooked, and enjoyably fattier than baby backs; vinegar-doused pulled pork sandwiches, which, unlike meat plates, come with sides – fries, plus slaw to pile on for added juice and crunch. \$\$\$

Primo's

1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-371-9055

The imposing, cavernous lobby of the Grand doesn't have that "do drop in" locals' hangout vibe. But this lively Italian spot is actually a great addition to the neighborhood. The pizzas alone – brick-oven specimens with toppings ranging from classic pepperoni to prosciutto/arugula – would be draw enough. But pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$

Primo Pizza Miami

3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedit. Thankfully that's the speciality of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

Sakaya Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami, Buena Vista Avenue

305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop). But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, 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



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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 kaffir 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. \$\$\$

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 unscented surroundings. The ambiance 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. \$\$

Tony Chan's Water Club

1747 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 pizzas. But the pizzas still hold up against the newbie pack, especially since exec chef Frank Crupi has upped the ante with unique-to-Miami offerings like a white (tomato-free) New Haven clam pie. Also available: salads, panini, and a tasty meatball appetizer with ricotta. There's a respectable wine and beer list, too. \$\$

Balans Biscayne

6789 Biscayne Blvd., 305-534-9191
It took longer than expected, but this Brit import's third Miami venue finally opened, and rather quietly – which has an upside. It's easier to get a table here (and to park, thanks to the free lot on 68th Street) than at Lincoln Road or Brickell. This, along with the venue's relatively large, open-to-the-street outdoor area, contributes to a more relaxed, neighborhood-focused vibe. The fun menu of global comfort food is the same (ranging from a creamy-centered cheese soufflé through savory Asian

potstickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$

Blue Collar

6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366
Like its predecessor in this space (Michael Bloise's American Noodle Bar), this working-class-themed eatery is helmed by a former fine-dining chef, Daniel Serfer, a Chef Allen's vet who now crafts casual, creative fare at prices all can afford. Dishes are eclectic. The roughly dozen veggie dishes alone range from curried cauliflower purée to maduros to bleu cheese roasted asparagus. Shrimp and grits compete with any in Charleston; pork and beans, topped with a perfectly runny fried egg, beats Boston's best. \$\$\$

Boteco

916 NE 79th St., 305-757-7735
This strip of 79th Street is rapidly becoming a cool alt-culture enclave thanks to inviting hangouts like this rustic indoor/outdoor Brazilian restaurant and bar. Especially bustling on nights featuring live music, it's even more fun on Sundays, when the fenced backyard hosts an informal fair and the menu includes Brazil's national dish, feijoada, a savory stew of beans plus fresh and cured meats. But the everyday menu, ranging from unique, tapas-like pastéis to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing – and budget-priced. \$\$

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 Ruocola 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 Tylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

East Side Pizza

731 NE 9th 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 loco, 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 César Zapata, whose previous restaurant concepts have included Blue Piano (gourmet stoner snacks) and Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea. That is, expect the unexpected. The Fed is an updated tavern featuring creative, from-scratch takes on traditional American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired “pig wings” (pork drumettes with homemade Buffalo sauce, blue cheese mousse, and pickled veggies). Desserts, from third partner Alejandro Ortiz, include sinful sticky buns. \$\$\$

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 ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make – in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756
Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites – organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001
Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not

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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 impressively creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamma produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also carves out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$

News Lounge

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-758-9932

Mark Soyka's new News is, as its name suggests, more a friendly neighborhood hangout and watering hole than a full-fledged eatery. Nevertheless the menu of light bites is — along with other lures like an inviting outdoor patio and rest rooms that resemble eclectic art galleries — part of the reason visitors stay for hours. Especially recommended are fat mini-burgers with chipotle ketchup; a brie, turkey, and mango chutney sandwich on crusty baguette; and what many feel is the original café's Greatest Hit: creamy hummus with warm pita. \$

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 homemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$-\$\$\$

Siam Rice

7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516

You'll find all the familiar favorite Thai and Japanese items here, and prices for curries and noodle dishes (all customizable regarding choice of protein, preparation, and heat level) are especially good at lunch. But don't overlook somewhat pricier specialties like a deep-fried yet near-greaseless boneless half duck with veggies in red curry sauce. There's also an unusually extensive list of salads, some with inventive fusion touches, like a grilled shrimp/soba salad featuring traditional Thai flavors (sriacha chiles, fish sauce, lime) and Japanese green tea noodles. \$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (deviled eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried focchio pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heftier items like burgers and steak au poivre. And don't miss the sticky date/toffee pudding. \$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7818

On the menu of sushi-bar specialties plus a small selection of Thai and Japanese cooked dishes, there are a few surprises, such as a unique lobster maki that's admittedly huge in price (\$25.95), but also in size: six ounces of crisp-fried lobster chunks, plus asparagus, avocado, lettuce, tobiko (flying fish), masago (smelt) roes, and special sauces. Thai dishes come with a choice of more than a dozen sauces, ranging from traditional red or green curries to the inventive, such as an unconventional honey sauce. \$\$\$

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, homemade Belgian waffles, a shareable chocolate fondue/fruit platter). Actually, some cocktails double as desserts (a Godiva dark chocolate martini) or Asian savories (infused 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 global blending makes fusion make sense. \$\$-\$\$\$

Yiva's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delia Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crustied Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using homemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

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, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$

Sabor Latin Restaurant & Cafe

1880 79th St. Cswy., 305-741-2020

This family-run restaurant serves big portions of homey traditional food from several Latin American countries, including Cuba (pan con bistec, ropa vieja), Mexico (nachos, 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, ajacó, 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)

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 focchio 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 ompah bands — none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several housemade sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222

When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Vatcharin Bhumichitr, you'd expect major media hype, fancy South Beach prices, and a fancy SoBe address. Instead Bhumichitr joined forces with Day Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious, authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet

9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012

If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials

like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$\$

Iron Sushi

9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311

With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambience. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363

Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public — always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambience is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food — some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$

PizzaFiore

9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924

Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crusted, oozing-with-goey-cheese pizzas reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings — sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co.

13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254

When people speak of the West Coast as the USA's quality coffeehouse pioneer territory, they're thinking Seattle — and then south through coastal California. North to Alaska? Not so much. But owner Michael Gesser did indeed open this hip place's parent in Fairbanks back in 1993, after years of traveling through every coffee-growing country in the world. Brews like signature smooth yet exotic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe don't even need cream or sugar, much less frappe frou-frou. All beans are house-roasted. There's solid food, too: brick-oven pizzas, salads, sandwiches, and pastries. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Bagel Bar East

1990 NE 123rd St., 305-895-7022

Crusty outside (even without toasting) and substantially chewy inside, the bagels here are the sort homesick ex-New Yorkers always moan are impossible to find in Miami. For those who prefer puffed-up, pillowy 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 á Sucre

899 NE 125th St., 305-891-0123

From the Vega brothers (who pioneered the Design and MiMo districts with, respectively, the original Cane A Sucre and UVA 69), this charming artisanal sandwich bar is the perfect breakfast/lunch stop before or after ingesting visual arts at nearby MOMA. Actually, creations like El Fig (fig confit, gorgonzola cheese, walnuts, and honey on an authentically French crisp-crust bread 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 leaden crusts here) or sweet facturas (Argentina's most popular breakfast items). They sell out fast. What some might not know is that despite its small size, Caminito's also crafts tasty big food: elaborate salads; hefty baguette sandwiches, like choripan sausage with chimichurri; pastas; major meat or poultry entrées. For lighter lunches, try tartas (quiches), also perfect party food. \$\$\$

Casa Mia Trattoria

1950 NE 123rd St., 305-899-2770

Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnocchi with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini – "beggar's purses" stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$

Chéen-huyae

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808

Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic

from achiote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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.

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

Flip Burger Bar

1699 NE 123rd St., 305-741-3547

Casual-chic burger bars, everywhere in South Beach, are still rare farther north. One reason this easy-to-miss venue is a must-not-miss for North Miami locals: The hefty half-pounders on fresh brioche buns include a scrumptious patty with Gruyere, mushrooms, and onion marmalade. The Fireman is a jalapeño/chipotle scorcher. There are even turkey and veggie variations. Other draws are hand-cut fries, beer-battered onion rings, a top-drawer beer list, budget-priced combo specials, conversation-friendly acoustics, and a South Beach rarity: free parking. \$\$\$

Giraffes

1824 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. Giraffes. 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 ajiaico. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharrón, 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, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissoné'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 pizzeria. 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-keyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

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 cucumber, 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. \$\$\$

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 natural 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 – rollads stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef, bacoo, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (preservatives, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Tops among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causas, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-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 Gouvella, 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. \$



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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-usted fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy's different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY

3427 NE 163rd St., 305-949-3318

In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don't worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire's Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you'll be a happy camper, especially if you're an ex-New Yorker. \$\$\$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Hanna's Gourmet Diner

13951 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2255

When Sia and Nicole Hemmati bought the Gourmet Diner from retiring original owner Jean-Pierre Lejeune in the late 1990s, they added "Hanna's" to the name, but changed little else about this retro-looking French/American diner, a north Miami-Dade institution since 1983. Customers can get a cheeseburger or garlicky escargots, meatloaf in tomato sauce or boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$-\$\$\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant

3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsa

1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsa curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaissa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$-\$\$\$

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; and 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 seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$

Kings County Pizza

18228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino's flopsy-crust, ketchup, cheese-fueled pies, stop here to sample a slice of the real thing. Admittedly, the crusts are not those of the coal-fired classics from Brooklyn's legendary Totono's or Grimaldi's, but they're similarly medium-thin and crisp – though not like a cracker; you can fold them for neat street eating, and they taste like honest bread, not cardboard. A variety of toppings are available even on slices. There are also whole pies with varied toppings. The "large" is humongous. \$\$-\$\$

KoneFood

387 NE 167th St., 305-705-4485

Cones contain ice cream. Kones, however, contain anything and everything edible – at least at this eatery, locally founded (though the original concept of ultimate portable convenience meals, in sealed flatbread cones, came from Italy). In their melting-pot American version, cone fillings range from breakfast items like huevos rancheros to Thai chicken, chicken curry, coconut shrimp, cones kon lechon (slow-roasted pork with mojo), various pizzas, BBQ, chicken Florentine, healthy green salads, more. There are even desserts like a flambéed apple Kone à la Normande. Authentic Belgian frites, too. \$

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 fagiola, 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. \$\$-\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

14831 Biscayne Blvd. 305-949-8800

www.limefreshmexicangrill.com
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. \$

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 sur-face-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$-\$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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, rib beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Isee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-654-4008

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$\$-\$\$

Slices Pizza & Pasta

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5684

While pizza by the slice is common street food in every city in the USA, this informal Italian eatery offers a variation particularly appropriate to Latin American-influenced Miami: slices served rodizio-style. Brazil's traditional rodizio restaurants feature many different grilled meats, served tableside by a continuing parade of waiters till diners cry uncle. Here the concept is the same, with dozens of varieties of pizza (plus several pastas) replacing the beef. \$\$

Soprano Café

3933 NE 163rd St., 855-434-9035

Sicilian native Rocco Soprano, original proprietor of South Beach's Soprano's, has transformed this Intracoastal Waterway space, formerly the enoteca Rack's, into an elegant but family-friendly restaurant featuring classic Italian dishes

plus steakhouse fare, all in prodigious portions. For an ultimate Miamian/Italian fusion experience, arrive by boat at Soprano's dock, grab a table on the water-view deck, and enjoy a coal-oven pizza – perhaps the famous truffled white pizza, or our personal fave secchi: sopressata salami, zesty tomato sauce, provolone, goat cheese, and fresh fri di latte mozzarella. \$\$\$

Sushi House

15911 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy Mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unprecedented ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Sushi Sake

13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: All sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crunch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$-\$\$\$

Tania's Table

18685 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-9425

A location at the tail end of a tiny, tired-looking strip mall makes this weekday lunch-only kosher eatery easy to miss. But the cute bistro, an extension of chef Tania Sigal's catering company, is well worth seeking for its unusually varied daily-changing menus – not just familiar Eastern European-derived dishes (chicken matzoh ball soup, blintzes, etc.) but numerous Latin American specialties (zesty ropa vieja), Asian-influenced items (Thai chicken/noodle salad), lightened Universal Ladies-Who-Lunch classics (custardy quiches, grilled trout with mustard sauce), and homemade baked goods. \$\$

Tuna's

17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630

www.tunasrawbarandgrille.com
The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a new chef, Rolf Fellhauer, who spent 28 years at the famed La Paloma. He has added his touch to the menu, with delicacies such as Oysters Moscow, muscels Chardonay, 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 ooba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartar with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

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

Daily Lunch Specials
Specials are served Monday thru Friday 11:00am to 3:00pm (Excluding Holidays)
All Lunch Specials include Fountain Beverage or Fresh Brewed Iced Tea or Coffee

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Betto's Ristorante Italiano

1009 Kane Concourse, 305-861-8166
After roughly 25 years as Caffè Da Vinci, this romantic remodeled, renamed space is now managed by Betto Di Carlo, also a 25-year Italian cuisine veteran (as former owner/effusively charming host of Surfside's neighborhood favorite Café Ragazzi). Best make reservations. Though off the tourist track, the place draws hungry hordes for homemade pastas like pappardelle ai porcini (toothsome wide noodles with fresh mushrooms). Veal piccata, lightly floured and sautéed medallions with a caper-studded lemon white wine sauce, and thicker mozzarella-stuffed chops are also popular. \$\$\$

Le Pine

1052 Kane Concourse, 305-861-1059
This upscale Lebanese restaurant serves dishes with the sort of understated sophistication that makes clear why Beirut was called the Paris of the East. You'll find familiar Middle Eastern favorites, but many have refinements that lift them above average; the 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, fath (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 luncheon/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256
It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the 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 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

18159 Biscayne Blvd., 305-466-0350
It's not surprising that this Florida-based "better burger" franchise is one of America's fastest-growing. With décor that's relaxingly retro yet futuristically earth-friendly (think recycled Coke bottle chairs), beverages ranging from milkshakes to craft beers, and sourced hormone/antibiotic-free, grass-fed Angus burgers on branded buns, for prices rivaling those for fast-food junkburgers, what's not to love? There are also vegetarian quinoa burgers or Kobe dogs, plus "accessories" including hand-cut fries, killer crisp-battered onion rings, freshly made, all-natural frozen custard, and toppings galore. \$

Cadillac Ranch

Village at Gulfstream Park 921 Silks Run Rd. #1615, 954-456-1031
It's hard to decide if the most fun interpretation of beef here is the weekend prime rib dinner special (with two sides and a meat 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 starchy/sugar-laden traditional favorites for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crust designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

Fuji Hana

3275 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 pricy but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic "Thai hot"). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

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 Milietto. 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 snapper, 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 Gnuoli 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?) Almost-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 Ho

16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338
Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crust-ed egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Copper Chimney

18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075
At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation – plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazas-e-lazzat (sundried tomato-stuffed paneer/potato dumplings in smooth cream sauce). \$\$\$

Epicure Gourmet Market & Café

17190 Collins Ave., 305-947-4581
Who even knew that the late Rascal House had an ocean view? Diners may have to eat standing up to glimpse water over the

dunes from the panoramic café windows of the gourmet market that replaced the Rascal, but you know you're on a tropical beach, not Brighton Beach. The big, bright café's menu, more global diner than Jewish deli, includes daily specials ranging from spa-grilled chicken to homemade Italian sausage and peppers. But it's worth seeking out items that made South Beach's original Epicure famous: sandwiches featuring housemade rare roast beef; shrimp or chunky smoked whitefish salads; fresh baked goods. \$\$\$

The H Restaurant

17608 Collins Ave., 305-931-9106
This friendly, family-owned bistro is the sort of homeaway-from-home found every few blocks in France – here Gerard and Karine Herrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/raspberry sauce, fish with an impeccable lemon beurre blanc, and a satisfying steak/frites (with peppery cognac cream sauce). We'd leave the American stuff to the kids. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Il Mulino New York

17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191
If too much is not enough for you, this majorly upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food – fried zucchini coils, 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 corner overlooking the cooks makes the Kitchen a comfortable spot for singles. \$\$\$

Piazzetta

17875 Collins Ave., 305-918-6816
You can't help feeling optimistic about a tourist town's food scene when its resort restaurants, which generally walk the middle of the road, get creative. And it doesn't get much more creative than this stylish restaurant and Italian market, which bills itself as a trip to an Italian-inspired "little market square," but which, along with artisanal salumi plus pizzas and pastas, serves sushi. Particularly tasty: the native Neapolitan pizza chef's truffled tagglio and mushroom pies; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

Sumo Sushi Bar & Grill

17630 Collins Ave., 305-682-1243
Sushi may 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, masago, cilantro, and spicy mayo, topped with rich scallop-studded "dynamite" sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 raviolo with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill

350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016
It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$



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