

BISCAYNE

October 2013

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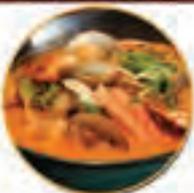
Volume 11 Issue 8

Times

Cruising for Fun & Profit

**Aboard the *Bimini SuperFast*,
Genting's latest gamble**
p. 26

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<p>Distant Worlds FINAL FANTASY</p> <p>November 23</p>	<p>Buika</p> <p>December 1</p>	<p>OCCUPANT Jonah Bokaer X Daniel Arsham</p> <p>December 6 - 8</p>	<p>FREE GOSPEL SUNDAYS Featuring JAMES FORTUNE</p> <p>December 8</p>	<p>WE WILL ROCK YOU THE MESSIAH - QUEEN - Ben Elton</p> <p>December 10 - 15</p>	<p>MICHAEL McDONALD</p> <p>December 14</p>
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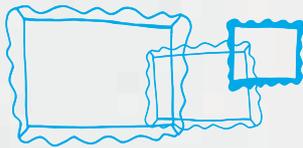
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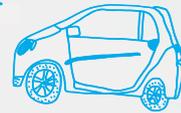
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 South Florida Distributors

PRINTING

Stuart Web, Inc.
www.stuartweb.com

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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 (we hope) lots of good questions for candidates Jacqui Colyer, Richard Dunn, Jr., Keon Hardemon, and Robert Malone. *BT* editor Jim Mullin will moderate. For more information, contact Jo Wilder at jwilder@live.com.

Let's Get Right to the Point

Regarding Terence Cantarella's train story ("Life in the Rail World," September 2013): What a great article!

*Ivo Santamaria
Brickell*

Love Trains, Don't Want to be Railroaded

It was a great pleasure to read "Life in the Rail World" by Terence Cantarella in your September issue. We have gone up to Tampa by Amtrak quite a few times over the years, splurging on a sleeper car so we could stretch out and have a private bathroom. Even with that splurge for two, the price was unbeatable.

Unlike Cantarella's experience, ours were of bustling platforms and cordial passengers. In the dining car, the service was professional and cheerful, and the menu — a menu! — was definitely better than airline food.

I enjoyed learning the history of the various rail lines in Florida, and didn't know that Amtrak came into existence as a congressional deal to keep the nation's rail system somehow afloat, or that conservatives are still — after nearly a half-century — trying to put it out of business.

Most important, though, was Cantarella's depiction of the possible future of All Aboard Florida, and the involvement of a hedge fund that is somehow involved with another state rail line that apparently controls the FEC rail corridor.

We all know that hedge funds build up a fledgling enterprise and then unload it as quickly as possible for a profit — and this one looks like it will be unloaded in such a politically clever way that the state — read, us taxpayers — will have no choice but to assume responsibility for it.

I hope readers and the public will pay attention as this business deal moves along. Railroads have a mystique about them. But we don't want to be distracted

and wind up getting "railroaded."

*Lynda Steinberg
Miami*

Not Too Late to Fix Our Park-Poor City

Congratulations to Jim W. Harper on his surprise marriage as revealed in his Going Green column ("I do, We Can," September 2013).

Yes, I see his connection between sea-level rise and gay marriage. Anything is possible when brain power and decency win over ignorance and prejudice.

As I recall, I have not met Jim and I had no idea he is gay, as I am.

Does this mean that all gays love green space and parks?

Actually, I have as many gay friends as straight friends who are scared of being outdoors and alone in nature.

In a city and county like ours, that attitude will not improve if kids don't have at least a neighborhood park to be exposed to. Current Miami leaders have failed miserably to create more parks in our park-poor city.

By design, we are failing to build a constituency for parks. As a community we are poorer for our lack of natural experiences, which only perpetuates the lack of parks.

At the Manatee Bend Park opening last month (Editor's note: See page 45), Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff said parks are the one place where people from all groups in a diverse city like Miami can mingle and meet. Otherwise we live in our separate realities.

It is tragic he has not spoken out more for more parks on the city commission, beside those in his District 2. Other commissioners should be ashamed that they have not followed the city's parks master plan or the comprehensive plan.

To put sea-level rise in perspective: Anyone taking out a 30-year mortgage along areas served by the *BT*, assuming they stay in the area, perhaps retire here, may not be able to sell their homes once paid off for what they paid — because in 30 years, we will be at the point where banks may not be financing at all in Florida's coastal areas. Thirty years will pass quickly.

*Steve Hagen
Belle Meade*

Cheered by Crime — As Long As It's Not in Hollywood

Derek McCann's monthly version of the crime beat ("Police Reports: Biscayne Crime Beat") is *the* best. It never fails to cheer me when I think that humanity is

.....
Continued on page 12



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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 10

doomed. This month he literally cracked me up with his sly wit and prosy style.

You should not only keep him in his post, but give him a significant pay raise.

*Joan Bueter
Hollywood*

Criminals Are So Interesting — As Long As They Avoid Pembroke Pines

I just have to write and let Derek McCann know how much I enjoy his writing style in his “Biscayne Crime Beat.”

Yes, crime happens. And, yes, people are *so* interesting!

*Bonnie Lind
Pembroke Pines*

We Love the ! And By the Way....

I was just composing an e-mail to see if the August *Biscayne Times* had been distributed — decided to check first, and it just arrived!!

I live in the Majorca Towers condo and have been checking since August 1. My daughter also gets her copy here. She lives in Biscayne Park, but it is not delivered to her street. The *BT* is really popular in our building, and the copies are usually gone the same day they are delivered.

We read the *BT* from cover to cover each month and thank you for your excellent newspaper, filled with interesting articles and otherwise unavailable information and news about our local area. We appreciate your quality journalism and service to this community.

Thank you for your wonderful newspaper.
*Name Withheld by Request
Sans Souci Estates*

Don't Avert Your Eyes from Thousands of Deaths

Thanks to Wendy Doscher-Smith for writing such an accurate article about the Miami-Dade County animal shelter (“Another Day, Another Dog Dies,” August 2013).

Too many people still look the other way, including Mayor Carlos Giménez and our county commissioners — except for Commissioner Sally Heyman.

Thousands of beautiful pets are killed at Miami-Dade’s shelter, many just due to lack of space.

*Gloria Ulmer
Miami*

The H-Word: What in World Were You Guys Thinking?

Your July cover story title was really offensive. “Homo Hysteria”? And the

article in general did nothing but bring back horrible events of the past.

Your paper did nothing to say or suggest anything to balance how far we have come and where we are now. You simply stirred up the negative past, and the piece went nowhere.

You should know that the word “homo” has only negative connotations and should not be used in any form. I was shocked when I read it, and *on the cover*. Really? It’s as if you used the n-word. It holds the same offensive traits that should never be tolerated in this day and age. You need to check with the ACLU or SAVE Dade when approaching such language.

*Name Withheld by Request
Upper Eastside*

The H-Word: A Powerful History Lesson During Gay Pride Month!

I think Joe Mooradian (“Letters,” August 2013) is an example of the “woe is me” attitude when he can’t appreciate how evolved Florida thinking has become since the era depicted in your July cover story, “Homo Hysteria.”

It was an interesting history lesson, though it did replay a sad past. To think that the article was timed to the Gay Pride parade is nonsense, but even if it was, so what? It was a powerful reminder of how times have changed.

The past should not be forgotten.

*Pat Burke
Vista, California*

Better Late Than Never Department: Little Farm Under Siege

I would like to thank you for posting to your website a very informative article on Little Farm Trailer Park (“From Lovely to Lousy to Lost,” April 2010).

I moved from the trailer park in 2010, but my mother is still there so I visit often. Trailers are being demolished left and right once they’re vacant. Residents are on pens and needles, afraid they will be put out on the street at any moment. No one knows what’s really going on.

I decided to do some detective work and your story was the best information I have come across.

Thank you, Erik Bojnansky, for writing this article. And thank you, Silvia Ros, for the photos. You guys are amazing.

Keep up the outstanding work. I have definitely become a fan of *Biscayne Times*.

*Lucie Lu
Miami*

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Goodbye, Old Fin

Turning their back on tradition, the Dolphins unveil a sleek new logo

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

As a lifelong Miami Dolphins fan, watching the Dolphins play their season-opening game against the Cleveland Browns was tough. Really tough. I know they won, 23-10. I know second-year quarterback Ryan Tannehill looked like he's coming along. But what exactly was that on the side of their helmets?

It was a dolphin, although not the same dolphin the team has worn, with some modification, since 1966. No, that dolphin, as we all know, wore a helmet with an "M" on it. And it appeared to be jumping out of the water, through an orange sunburst. It was campy. It was pop. It was quintessentially Miami. (The less cartoony, 1970s-1980s iteration pictured here was my personal favorite.)

The new dolphin more resembles an actual dolphin. It wears no helmet. It's sleeker and, to some, more elegant. To me, it's fairly generic, like something you would find in the window of Dolphin Lasik in Weston.

The new logo, along with a decidedly minimalist redo of the uniform, was unveiled in April, but since I don't bother to watch preseason games, it wasn't until early September that I saw the new ensemble on the field. My initial impression: There's a line between sporting a "clean" look and no look at all. The Dolphins may have crossed it.

Some fans no doubt love the new aesthetic. But football fans also like stats, so consider this one: The Dolphins are now only the third franchise to significantly alter their logo after having won a Super Bowl. The other two are the New York Jets and the New York Giants. Except that the Jets, after two decades of something that resembled airline letterhead ("We Fly To Last Place"), went back to their 1960s Super Bowl-winning logo in the late 1990s.

And the Giants' latest logo, an "NY" introduced in 2000, is almost identical to the team's logo from the 1960s; so not really new at all.

That makes the Dolphins the only Super Bowl-winning franchise whose current logo has absolutely no relevance to its championship history.

Why is that? Probably because, in almost every other National Football League city, tradition counts for something. The Green Bay Packers didn't sniff a Super Bowl between 1968 and 1997, but never came close to losing their iconic "G." The Kansas City Chiefs haven't been to a Super Bowl since 1970 — so long ago that Don Shula hadn't yet been named the Dolphins' head coach — but just try and take away their trademark arrowhead. Even the Browns, whose last championship came in pre-Super Bowl 1964, have never monkeyed with their solid orange helmets.

You know what teams typically seek a makeover? Bad teams. Desperate



teams. Teams with no history to speak of, like the New England Patriots who, before adopting the "Flying Elvis" logo in 1993, were best known for getting blown out by the Chicago Bears in the 1986 Super Bowl; and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who traded their orange-and-red swashbuckler for a pewter-backed Jolly Roger in 1996, hoping people would forget that few teams had ever been so wretched for so long.

(Yes, it's true that both those teams have gone on to win Super Bowls — the Patriots, three of them — since switching logos, but that had less to do with their newfound sartorial splendor than, say, having a really good defense, or Tom Brady at quarterback.)

That's not the case with the Dolphins, who, even without a Super Bowl trip in almost 30 years, remain one of the NFL's storied franchises: The first team to go to three straight Super Bowls, the only team to boast an undefeated season, a team whose alumni include the winningest coach of all time, more than half-a-dozen hall-of-famers, and one of the three or four greatest quarterbacks in history. (No, not Jay Fiedler.)

Anywhere else but Miami, people — fans, the team's owners — would

appreciate that. Here, we call it "living in the past," by which we mean remembering what happened before breakfast today. We like to keep moving, mix things up. That's why we remake the skyline every couple of years.

In the case of the new logo, the switch is also undoubtedly about trying to move more merchandise. *Gotta get something with the new dolphin on it.* Ultimately, though, what sells T-shirts and caps is winning football. Of the top-10 best-selling teams on NFLshop.com during the 2012 season, six were playoff teams, with the top two being Super Bowl combatants Baltimore and San Francisco. The other four were the Giants, Bears, Dallas Cowboys, and Pittsburgh Steelers, all decidedly old-school when it comes to their logos.

What's a fan to do? I hope the Dolphins win more than the six or seven games the experts expect them to win this year and — sure, why not? — sell enough gear to make the team bosses happy. In the meantime, I'll be checking out the clearance racks.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Cue the Clowns

There's no such thing as a boring Miami mayoral election

By Jack King
BT Contributor

This year's City of Miami mayoral race looked to be pretty interesting, a contest between Mayor Tomás Regalado and Commissioner Francis Suarez.

Suarez started off with a bang, raising large sums of money and plastering posters everywhere, with emphasis on the black neighborhoods. Regalado did almost nothing. He just waited to see what would come of the early maneuvering.

Then a funny thing happened on the way to election day: Suarez's campaign workers got caught setting up an illegal absentee-ballot scheme. Weeks later, after another staffer's obnoxious online rants went viral, he dropped out, leaving Regalado an easy road to re-election.

Memo to Suarez: If you're going to cheat with absentee ballots, hire some boleteros from Hialeah. They're professional stuffers, and they do it well. Plus if they get caught, they'll take the rap for you — as long as you pay in advance.

As a young reporter at the *Palm Beach Post*, I began paying attention to Miami politics when the city's mayor, Robert King High, was running for governor. He impressed me as an upstanding guy who was truly interested in his constituents.

Years later I found out that, while he was campaigning across the state, he had a *Herald* reporter writing daily articles

about him, suggesting that he was actually in Miami, working on city business.

Then, while out of town, he died of a massive heart attack. Miami's commission, looking for a mayoral replacement, selected Commissioner Steve Clark. To fill Clark's commission seat, they turned to a young state legislator, born in Puerto Rico. His name was Maurice Ferre.

Clark served as mayor for three years and then moved on to the county commission. Miami was no longer the center of the universe in Dade County.

Ferre also moved on, mostly to symbolic national appointments, which were just right for him. A perpetual bon vivant, he was always the hit of the cocktail party. He also never worked an honest day in his life.

He was a board director on more than a dozen family corporations. And, when he finally did take a job, it was running Maule Industries. He was so good at it that he took Maule, one of the largest construction-supply companies in the world, into bankruptcy during one the biggest building booms in the Western Hemisphere.

In 2000 he decided to run for Miami mayor. By this time he'd already held elective office for some 12 years in various positions, and financial disclosure rules were significantly tougher.

When he filled out his disclosure form, he was chastised for leaving most of it blank. When asked why he had no income listed, he replied that "he did



deals and got paid out of the country."

To this day Maule creditors are still looking for their money. Ferre also took one of his cronies from Maule to city hall. His name? Cesar Odio.

After years as city manager, Odio spent a little time in the big house. In his defense, he was only doing what his bosses told him to do — the biggest boss of all being Jorge Mas Canosa, president of the Cuban American National Foundation.

On one of the FBI audio tapes that sent him to jail, Odio is heard complaining that he's the only person at city hall who doesn't have a Rolex, and why is it that no one has offered him one?

Flash back to 1970. Another new face occupies the mayor's office — David Kennedy. He was popular and was a good leader. However, in classic Miami fashion, he ran afoul of developers who wanted his services. He was indicted for bribery and removed from office. His replacement? None other than Maurice Ferre. Talk about putting the fox in the henhouse.

Kennedy went to trial because he was not guilty, and he was found not guilty.

He returned to the mayor's office and finished his term, but he never ran for office again. He did, however, get even. He became a political consultant.

In 1985 a young Cuban attorney from Harvard named Xavier Suarez ran a brilliant campaign, beating Raul Masvidal and Maurice Ferre. He was a very good mayor and for eight years ran city hall without theatrical stupidities.

In those days, the mayor was also a voting member of the city commission. Suarez and the commissioners were elected citywide. Four of the five lived in Coconut Grove, within a short distance of each other.

Alas, Suarez was too good to be true. He ran for mayor again in 1997, won the popular vote, but then was removed by the courts when all absentee ballots were ruled invalid — a result of massive fraud. That gave the election to Joe Carollo — a year after the fact.

High drama is an essential part of electing a Miami mayor. So even though it looks like smooth sailing for Regalado, don't bet on it.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com




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Baby Boomers and the Land of Missed Opportunity

Grandparents, parents, and Generation Y

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

One of my brothers sent me a Huffington Post article that was yet another indictment of the entitled yuppies of Generation Y. The media have continuously analyzed Gen Y since the 2008 financial crisis, as droves of kids pour out of four-year universities saddled with unimaginable debt and unmarketable job skills.

The article says that those of us born between the late 1970s and early 1990s are suffering from unhappiness because life hasn't measured up to our overblown expectations and deluded sense of self-worth. We're all supposedly part of this soft, coddled lump that was told to follow our hearts, pursue personal fulfillment, and that our dreams would come true because we're special.

That got me to thinking. I remember my parents telling me I was smart, that I had the potential to do whatever I wanted. But I'm pretty sure *their* parents encouraged ambition, or else they wouldn't have gone to college and discovered ways to earn more resources in less time and with less labor.

One generation works with its hands so the next can work with its mind, and the next can work with its heart.

Sell insurance instead of swinging a hammer? Sounds great. Study law instead of baking bread? Sign me up. And a decade or two later, the conversation evolves: Learn

about fine art rather than the art of selling. Study people rather than money.

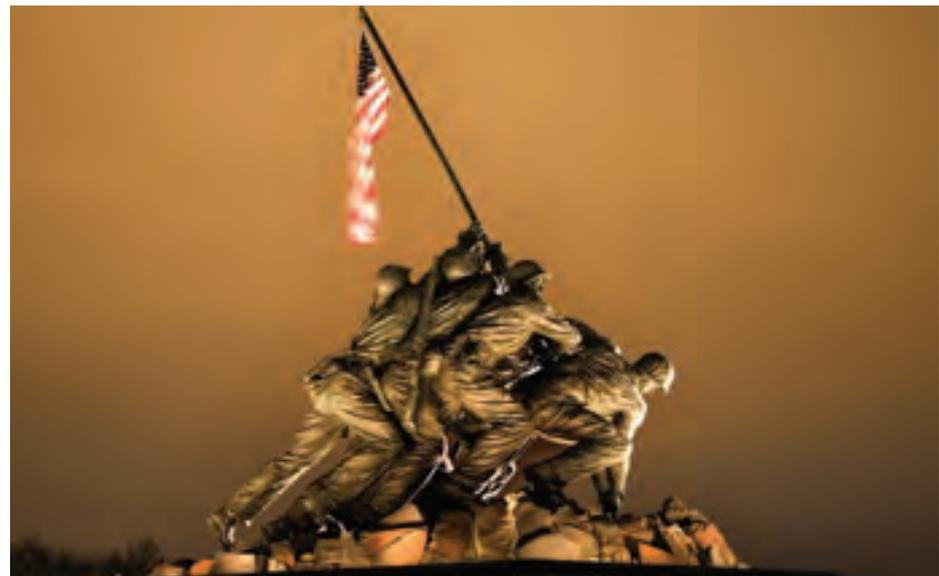
The only thing Gen Y has done wrong is follow the natural evolution of society, but the United States is so historically averse to pursuits of the heart that something recoils in our Puritan subconscious.

The Baby Boomer generation is possessed of two fundamental delusions. The first is that all their hard work was directly responsible for America's unbridled prosperity. It wasn't; the work their parents did in the postwar years laid the foundation for America's growth and transition from a manufacturing to a service economy.

People left college in the 1970s with little to no student debt, and their first house was about two year's income. America in the 1980s grew richer and more prosperous than their wildest expectations for reasons totally unrelated to how closely they kept their noses to the grindstone.

There were countless unmet market demands, many industries remained localized and had yet to fall under the control of international conglomerates, new technologies were changing the world, and homes — the largest investment most people ever make — appreciated as a matter of fact, not fortune.

In fact, America did so well from the late 1970s through the 1990s that success went from a happy surprise to the new normal. We were raised in that new normal.



America didn't grow so much because the average American was out being prosperous; the average American prospered because America was doing so well. Value increased at all levels.

The second Baby Boomer delusion is that they're not responsible for taking that prosperity and driving it into a wall of shortsighted greed. They're *entirely* responsible. Everything currently wrong with this country — economically, politically, and culturally — is on the shoulders of those in charge, and Boomers still control every relevant corner office.

It was bank bosses, financial players, high-ranking politicians, and senior policymakers who engineered the financial meltdown. I doubt interns were involved.

Our morally confused media landscape? None of my friends run the networks or publish magazines. How about the easy credit that helps people fund a lifestyle marketed to them relentlessly and insidiously? I'm pretty sure all of those businesses are controlled by guys in their 60s who enjoy eye-watering paychecks.

In a nation where wages have failed to keep pace with the actual cost of life, where one generation apparently finds the next two it spawned and cultivated oddly

worthless, it's no wonder that my peers seem demotivated. Not without hope or ready to quit, but honest about reality.

Reality is that average skills barely prosper in this economy. You will never find financial security in a major city with an unskilled job. America is now made up of intellectual economies: financial services, healthcare, technology, and other science- and math-based pursuits.

These jobs aren't for average minds. They're for minds that have three things: (1) above-average and specific natural intelligence; (2) early access to computers; and (3) a high level of technical education. This is the new normal.

My generation is not blind and entitled. Our eyes are open, and our expectations for a life of reasonable prosperity have been damaged. For most, homeownership, paying off student debt, and rising above the middle will be lifelong fantasies.

Gen Y simply recognizes that America is not for the hungry — it's for the bloodthirsty.

So please, Boomers, give the rest of us a break. Your parents left you a perfectly healthy nation, and you gave it the plague. All we did was catch it.

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

October: It isn't just for zombies anymore. Don't get us wrong. We do hope you'll be shambling slowly through Zombie Crawl at the **Shops at Midtown Miami** on October 19, in full gruesome regalia. (Details at www.southfloridazombiecrawl.com.)

And though high season is still months away, businesses in *Biscayne Times* territory seem to be in high gear already, not crawling, judging from the near-record number of BizBuzz submissions this month. Let's get to 'em.

SAVE Dade, a leading organization protecting LGBT people against discrimination, plans to fight bigotry-based zombification at Armageddon 2013, the group's 19th annual Halloween fundraising ball, on October 26 at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The \$100 admission includes open bar, hors d'oeuvres, music by DJ Tracy Young, surprise performances, and a costume contest. VIP tickets (\$150) include all the above plus a pre-ball cocktail reception honoring young community leaders. Info and tix: www.savedadehalloween.org.

Sadly, those of us who are a bit too fond of overindulging in Halloween treats can't hide inside a costume all year. But we can get rid of the extra poundage, and be rewarded in other ways than food, by signing up for the Ultimate Weight Loss

Challenge at **Orange Theory Fitness** (18839A Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-0544). Biggest losers in the six-week program win \$1000 in cash plus prizes — and a bod that looks great in anything (or nothing).

At **Daily Offering Yoga** (6901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-6406), this season's featured classes balance minds as well as bodies. On Mondays, October 7-28, Meditation 101's four-class series establishes the building blocks for those interested in starting the practice. Mondays in November (11/4-11/25), Yoga 101 is recommended both for beginners and students wanting a refresher course on the fundamentals of safe yoga practice.

Not to neglect readers whose minds lean more toward an unbalanced "too much is not enough" philosophy: In Munich, where Oktoberfest originated more than two centuries ago, the celebration ended on October 3. Miami can do better. At **The Butcher Shop Beer Garden & Grill** (165 NW 23rd St., 305-846-9120) it runs throughout the month, featuring the eatery's own homemade bratwursts and varying German beers, plus contests, raffles, and giveaways every Friday and Saturday night from October 4-26.

You can look forward to a late Oktoberfest celebration, too, at **Chef Rolf's Tuna's Seafood Restaurant** on October 26 & 27 (17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630). To add considerably to the festivities, owner Michael Chiodo has just completed installation of a new tap system in the recently renovated restaurant's Yellowfin Sports Lounge. There



are now ten additional brewskis offered, plus six more at the outdoor patio bar. If you'd like some solids to accompany the suds, the September 30 end of Miami Spice brought the beginning of Tuna's own prix fixe multi-course discount dinner, priced at \$39.95.

October is both National Italian Heritage Month and National Pasta Month, and the proud Italian-Americans at **Laurenzo's Italian Market** (16445 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-944-5052), which includes a pastry shop, is celebrating by reviving an historical Italian-American sweet street-food treat: the Charlotte Russe. It's simple — essentially just a layer of sponge cake topped with scads of real whipped cream (in a signature cardboard cylinder whose bottom pushes up as you eat) — but irresistible. Trust us, or ask your great grandma: You want one.

There's a double discount for *BT* readers this month at **Siam Rice** (7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516), courtesy of the Thai/sushi restaurant's owner Kanittha Wanjean. Continuing is the all-day-long deal on Thailand's superb Singha beer — which actually, unlike most Asian brews, is crafted after the style of German and Czech beers: two for \$6. And a new offer this month takes \$5 off checks of \$30 or more, excluding lunch specials, for those

bringing in this month's ad.

Join us in welcoming **Diner 22** (40 NE 3rd Ave., 305-374-0177), a new advertiser and a new addition to downtown's burgeoning restaurant scene. The retro-mod spot serves up all the nostalgic diner classics, including an all-day breakfast featuring everything from omelets to waffles.

Celebrate the goodness of greenness on October 26, at the inaugural **Miami Shores Green Day**. Put together by the Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce, the street fair/marketplace will close off NE 2nd Avenue from 3:00-8:00 p.m., allowing revelers to enjoy music, organic food/drink, demonstrations, and booths from eco-friendly local businesses, including numerous *BT* advertisers.

Recycling gets a fun and artful new interpretation from new advertiser **RAVA Designs** (www.facebook.com/RaVa.Designs), whose proprietor, Raquel Vallejo creates one-of-a-kind "contemporary studio jewelry" from old costume jewelry. If you have a box of outdated or broken treasures you hang onto for sentimental reasons but never wear, bring it to the Green Day event for a complimentary consultation with

Continued on page 24

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BizBuzz

Continued from page 22

Raquel on revamping and restyling your retired pieces into something unique.

While you're at Green Day, stop by and say hi to Elizabeth Yelin, owner of new advertiser **Roadrunner Packing & Shipping** (9480 NE 2nd Ave., 305-757-4949), an authorized FedEx, DHL, and USPS agent. Though Roadrunner is barely a month old, Elizabeth is no newbie to packing and shipping. Having managed an import/export business for many years, she can advise on the most efficient and cost-effective method to mail anything anywhere. The shop also sells all manner of packing accessories you might need.

Is there any more classic street fair food than sausages? No way, especially the globally influenced, Miami-made beauties from **Proper Sausages** (9722 NE 2nd Ave., 786-334-5735), where proprietors Freddy and Danielle Kaufmann continue adding artisanal and local sausage supplements to their stock. New this month: house-crafted mustards and pickles to pair with their sausages, and fresh organic produce from nearby Little River Market Garden.

Celebrating at Green Day the grand opening of new advertiser **Bike Nerds** (9538 NE 2nd Ave., 786-332-3463), partners Thomas Korrar and Diego Pinzon have arranged for 20-year veteran Miami Shores police officer Cliff Vickers to do 15-minute bike safety and maintenance sessions, tentatively scheduled for 4:00, 5:00, 6:00, and 7:00 p.m. The shop itself is full-service, selling both new and pre-owned, top-quality bikes, plus helmets, locks, and other accessories. The nerds also specialize in tune-ups and bike restoration, and custom-building.

Green Day will also enable folks to familiarize themselves with the growing variety of health/lifestyle-improvement options offered locally, like new advertiser and new business **Vida Nutrition** (11098 Biscayne Blvd. #401, 786-479-4081). Even people who exercise can have a hard time losing weight, so owner Dina Garcia, a licensed dietician/nutritionist, invites Green Day visitors to stop by for a free consultation, including body fat analysis, that could start you on the road to big changes. Dina's services range from working out a personal nutrition plan to giving your pantry a celebrity-style detox.

For those interested in alternative medicine, Kim Krause of **Miami Shores Holistic Health** (9999 NE 2nd Ave. #300, 305-999-5527), a licensed Acupuncture Physician and Doctor of Oriental Medicine, will be speaking in Green Day's health

& wellness tent. She'll also be happy to offer free personal consultations, through tongue and pulse evaluation, to anyone who stops by her table.

Speaking of medical matters, **Leung Healthcare**, a multi-office medical and dental practice, has a schedule of October special events that, though not Green Day-related, practically constitute a fair in themselves. Learn how to manage your diabetes and improve your quality of life from certified diabetes educator and speaker Diana Bell at three Leung locations: October 9, 1:30-2:30 p.m. at 888 NE 126th St. #101, 305-899-1406; October 16, 3:30-4:30 p.m. at 16200 NE 13th Ave., 305-760-2950; and, in Hollywood, October 16, 1:00-3:00 p.m. at 824 S. Federal Hwy., 305-760-2950. And from October 4-25, Leung will be having open enrollment for medical and dental coverage. Call 305-760-2950 for an appointment.

A correction: In last month's BizBuzz item about **Happily Ever Elder** (786-348-0712), a personal-assistant business with a full range of services geared toward the elderly, we got the name of owner Stephanie Nathanson wrong. We're especially sorry because it's a very personal business. Stephanie herself provides all services, with respect and understanding that comes from experience caring for her own maternal grandmother. Our apologies.

Up in Fort Lauderdale, **Scan Design** (1400 SW 33rd. Pl., 954-764-1300) is having its once-a-year warehouse sale this month: up to 70% off sofas, dining and bedroom sets, accessories, much more. Note: The sale is at Scan's Broward warehouse only, not its North Miami Beach showroom.

Even farther north in Pompano Beach, **Mei Kitchens** (2150 NW 33rd St., 954-970-4130), which revolutionized contemporary kitchen and bath cabinet technology and design, is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a liquidation sale of up to 50% off. And exciting news for Miamians who prefer shopping locally: Mei just signed a lease for a showroom at 12949 Biscayne Blvd., which will showcase the company's home furnishings line. No date yet for the opening except "soon." If that's not soon enough, preview Mei's unique installations at www.meikitchens.com.

For a home stunning enough to house the most gorgeous of furniture, contact **Kimberly O'Mahony** (305-674-4000 x4143 office, 305-970-6000 cell), a returning advertiser who is a third-generation Realtor raised in South Florida. With EWM, she's an Upper Eastside pioneer,

Continued on page 25

specializing in high-end homes in the Biscayne Corridor's waterfront communities — Miami Shores, Belle Meade, Sans Souci, Morningside, Normandy Shores, Shorecrest, Bayside, and Biscayne Point.

It's said that a picture's worth a thousand words, and it's true that for as long as **MC2 Realty** (305-495-6539, www.mc2realty.com) has been an advertiser, we've enjoyed fantasizing over the firm's ads of residences in all price ranges, as well as its photo-packed Facebook page. The recent news from MC2's Marie-Charlotte Piro: an additional new Facebook page exclusively about life, people, and homes in Morningside (www.facebook.com/morningsidelife). An instant hit, Morningside Life has attracted more than 500 fans in under two months.

With autumn's dropping temperatures comes condensation and cloudy windows resulting in dramatically (and sometimes depressingly) less light entering your home, so this is a particularly crucial time of year to wipe your panes regularly, advises José M. Belsol of **Window Gang** (305-756-0349). What we'd advise, since doing this from the outside can be mighty dangerous, is bringing in the Gang's experts to do the cleaning for you — safely.

Toilet papering a house may be an appropriate Halloween trick, but anyone who's seen the episode of *Bad Dog* featuring a schnauzer who does it all year long knows: Not so funny. If you own such a pet, welcome new advertiser **Barkhaus** (305-484-9038), a dog-care business specializing in obedience training and behavior modification. Other services: day care, boarding, walking, grooming/pampering. We also have to point out that Barkhaus is a great name for a band.

You won't be hearing that band at Miami-Dade College's inaugural **OLA Music Fest** on October 11, opening MDC Live Arts' 23rd season with a wide-ranging representation of the new wave of Latin music. The one-night festival, at downtown's Grand Central concert/events venue, starts at 9:00 p.m. For tix (\$25 general admission, \$10 for MDC students) and info go to www.mdclivearts.org/home.html.

The Rhythm Foundation announces the second annual collaboration between the city of Nice, France, and its sister city Miami, for the Miami Nice Jazz Festival, October 23-November 10. The fest encompasses four feature events co-presented by downtown's Gusman Center and the newly opened South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, plus satellite events including after-concert jam sessions and intimate "jazz encounters" at area clubs. For information and tickets (\$25-\$75): MiamiNiceJazzFestival.com

Planning ahead, check out this issue's ad for the 10th season of the **Yamaha Concert Series at Saint Martha's** (9301 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-0005 or www.saintmartha.tix.com) described as "world-class concerts at movie-ticket prices, and the popcorn is free." Though the first concert isn't till November 16, the whole season's schedule, through March 2, is set, with a wide variety of music from internationally renowned artists. Ticket prices really are movie-level (\$10 general admission), and include a post-concert wine reception with "popcorn" ranging from empanadas to kosher cookies.

As for non-musical November highlights: Mark your calendar as full from November 17-24, the dates for **Miami Book Fair International**, the nation's largest literary gathering. Turning 30 this year, the festival, held at Miami-Dade College's Wolfson Campus, will feature multilingual presentations from 400+ well-known authors, plus children's literacy activities, demos for food enthusiasts, the festive weekend Street Fair, much more. There are also pre-fair events this month. For complete info: www.miamibookfair.com.

Families seeking a high school for their children can investigate all the outstanding academic and extracurricular programs offered by **Monsignor Edward Pace High School** (15600 NW 32nd Ave.) at Pace's open house, November 16. Tours start at 9:00 or 10:30 a.m. For more info: 305-623-7223 ext. 342, www.PaceHS.com.

Attention, parents with younger children: **W.J. Bryan Elementary Museums Magnet School** (1201 NE 125th St.) is now offering private tours of the school, designated an official historic landmark, that enable you to investigate the beautiful Mediterranean Revival building (with 21st-century enhancements) as well as all the benefits your child can enjoy as a student. Application for the general magnet programs cycle begins October 1, so contact Rosemary Wolfson (305-891-0602) to schedule a visit.

Finally: To get around to all the above, check out this month's ad for **Car2Go** (Miami.car2go.com). You've doubtless seen the company's Smart Cars all over Miami. Well, once you enroll and receive a membership card that allows access to any of the cuties you find parked (or, alternatively, to reserve a car online), you could be driving one for 38 cents per minute — parking, insurance, gas, and repairs included. It's economical, eco-friendly, and effortless.

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

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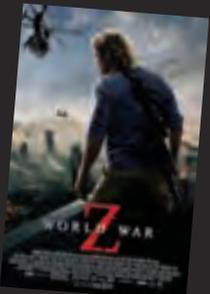
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Bimini Super Fast



Cruising for Fun & Profit

To Bimini and back: Not perfect, not terrible, and maybe not what it appears to be

By Erik Bojnansky
Photos by Silvia Ros



Government Cut and Miami in the background: Under way by 9:15 a.m.

Incat Tasmania, an Australian ship-building company, has launched 25 large vessels capable of surpassing speeds of 45 knots, or 51 miles per hour. One of those ships, the recently completed *Francisco*, has been proclaimed the fastest ship in the world.

Named after Pope Francis, the 325-foot long, 5000-ton *Francisco* can achieve speeds of up to 58 knots, or 67 mph, and is capable of carrying 1000

people. Incat intends to deliver the *Francisco* to the Western Hemisphere, where it will ply an aquatic route between Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Montevideo, Uruguay.

Until that time, and maybe even after, Resorts World Bimini will continue to claim that the *Bimini Superfast*, which has been shuttling hundreds of people between Miami and Bimini for the past three months, is the fastest cruise ship serving the Americas.

Built in Germany in 2001, the *Bimini Superfast* can achieve maximum speeds of 31 knots, or 36 mph, according to FleetMon.com. That might seem slow compared to the *Francisco*, until you consider that the *Bimini Superfast* is more than six times heavier and twice as long.

Besides, the *Bimini Superfast* is being marketed as a cruise ship, not a speedy ferry.

As such, the *Superfast*, which claims a maximum capacity of 1600 people, is also carrying four bars, two restaurants, and a pair of casino areas filled with slot machines and table games.

Oivind Mathisen, editor of *Cruise Industry News*, isn't sure if *Bimini Superfast* is the fastest cruise ship in the Western Hemisphere right now, but he does admit that, for a 33,000-ton, 670-foot-long vessel, the *Bimini Superfast* is pretty fast.

"Most cruise ships are built for a top speed of 20 to 22 knots [23 to 25 mph]," Mathisen says. "Usually cruise ships travel at 12 to 18 knots [14 to 21 mph].

The slower they go, the less fuel they use, and the more energy-efficient it is for them to stay afloat."

And it's called *Bimini Superfast*. That means something, right? "I think *Superfast* is some kind of brand," Mathisen says.

Indeed it is. For most of its existence, the *Bimini Superfast* was named *Superfast VI* and, as part of the *Superfast Ferries* fleet, transported people between Italy and Greece.

The change in name and mission occurred earlier this year, when the Greek company Attica Holdings sold *Superfast VI* to Resorts World Bimini's parent corporation, the Malaysian-based Genting Group, for \$73 million.

Here's where things get really superfast. Within three months of purchasing the vessel, Genting completed its modifications (including turning a pool into a dance floor) and inked a deal with Port Miami to pay \$11 million to improve

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Cruising

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Terminal H (where the ship is docked) and \$7 million per year in rent.

During that same time frame, according to Bahamian media, Genting completed its acquisition of the 750-acre Bimini Bay Resort (a.k.a. Resorts World Bimini), presented a \$150 million master plan to the Bahamian government (which no one outside of the prime minister's cabinet apparently has seen), and completed the construction of a 10,000-square-foot casino with 153 slot machines and 15 table games.

The original plan: Start launching two trips a day from Miami to Bimini by June 28.

But Genting was moving a little too fast. The United States Coast Guard deemed the ship unsafe. Among the problems: The back-up emergency power system didn't operate correctly, the crew failed tests on how to respond to an emergency (including how to operate the vessel's lifeboat machinery), and there weren't enough sprinkler heads. It took a month for those problems to be corrected.

Finally, on July 20, the *Bimini Superfast* undertook its maiden voyage from Miami to Bimini. In celebration, the ship was promoted on billboards, in e-mail blasts, online advertisements, and radio commercials all over South Florida.

Looming in the background is Genting Group's intentions for Miami. Two years ago the \$45 billion corporation, which owns 50 percent of Miami-based Norwegian Cruise Lines and operates casinos all over the world, announced they bought the Miami Herald building, which they planned to replace with Resorts World Miami, a \$3 billion resort that would include a casino large enough to accommodate 8500 slot machines.



Slot machines are the first thing you see when boarding *Bimini SuperFast*.

During its \$500 million buying spree, Genting assembled 30 acres of property in the Omni-Edgewater area that including the old Omni Mall, the Boulevard Shops, a 527-room Hilton Hotel, and several large parking lots.

But an intensive lobbying campaign to allow casinos in Miami failed in the state capitol. So in March 2012, Genting declared that it would concentrate on building condos, hotels, retail space, and an 800-foot, publically accessible bayfront promenade where the Miami Herald building currently stands. Demolition crews are already ripping apart the 700,000-square-foot Herald building.

As for the Omni Mall, which Genting originally intended to transform into a casino, the company will turn that into a 215,000-square-foot office complex, with some 30,000 square feet being used by Genting itself. A pedestrian bridge

connecting Omni Mall to a Metromover station is already advertising Resorts World Bimini and the *Bimini Superfast*.

Not that Genting has given up.

Genting and other casino interests are preparing to lobby state legislators hard next year. "I think you'll see them [casino lobbyists] back perhaps even stronger than in 2012," David Hart, executive vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and a casino critic, told *The Florida Current* last month.

With so many fast-moving parts, it may not be surprising that problems would arise. For example, online reviews on websites like Yelp suggest that the *Bimini Superfast* still has a lot of kinks to work out. "The three hour wait makes IT NOT WORTH YOUR TIME," shouted a review by Juan A. from Miami on August 21. "[It takes] almost 2 hours of your day just getting to and from the

ship," declared Jim M. from Hollywood on August 31.

So why did Genting rush to start the Miami-Bimini ferry service? Is there some kind of connection between Genting's plans for Bimini and its aspirations for Miami? And is it really better in the Bahamas with Genting as a corporate citizen?

To find out, I booked a cruise on the *Bimini Superfast*.

A variety of ticket choices are offered on the *Bimini Superfast* website. Day trips from Miami to Bimini and back are \$69 on weekdays and \$99 on weekends. One-way trips are \$59 from Miami to Bimini and \$79 from Bimini to Miami. Children under 12 years get a ticket discount of \$10.

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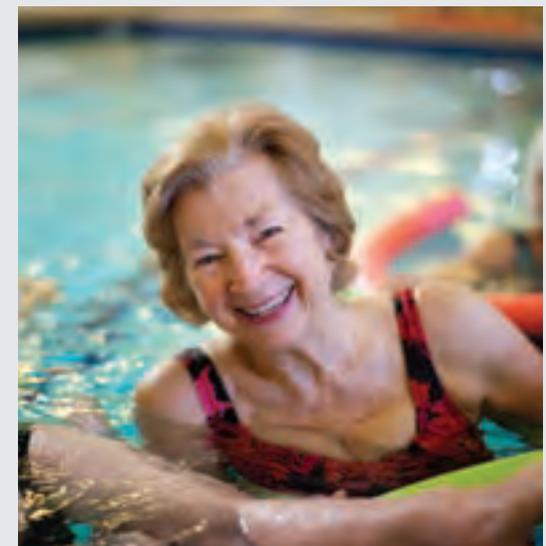
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Cruising

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Luggage can be checked for \$25. Parking at Terminal H can range from \$7 to \$20.

“That’s a pretty good deal,” remarks Jim Weakley, executive editor of *Florida Sportsman*. Air travel to Bimini often runs to the hundreds of dollars. Traveling by private boat can cost \$40 or \$50 one-way in fuel costs alone, Weakley points out.

Until recently there were evening trips in which passengers left Miami for Bimini at 7:00 p.m. returned around 6:00 a.m. The nighttime passengers never disembarked, says Heather Krasnow, a publicist for the Genting Group. Instead the *Bimini Superfast* remained anchored just off the Bimini coast.

These night cruises were transformed into cruise-to-nowhere trips in which, for \$20 per person on Friday and Saturday nights, guests are invited to party until dawn three miles off the coast of Florida, where prohibitive American gambling and drinking laws aren’t enforced.

Staterooms are available at prices ranging from \$40 to \$200 for a day trip



Passengers can choose a free breakfast buffet or better food for a price.

and from \$60 to \$250 for a night cruise.

Promotional rates are sometimes offered, too. I tried to snag one of the free tickets for a day trip, but by the time I settled on a date (September 9) they were all gone.

When my girlfriend dropped me off at Terminal H, my mind was foggy.

I’m not a morning person, yet the ticket demanded I there by 8:30 a.m. (If you check luggage, arrival time is 7:00 a.m.) It was now 8:25 a.m.

“You better hurry!” yelled a uniformed security guard at the terminal.

So I raced up an escalator with my backpack (one free carry-on is allowed).

I also had a printout of my ticket and my U.S. passport. Day-tripping American citizens must either have a U.S. passport or bring a birth certificate *and* a valid government I.D. If you stay overnight, you must have a passport. Non-U.S. citizens need a passport, an alien registration card, and (in some cases) a travel visa.

The ship’s entranceway was a drab lounge filled with slot machines. A couple of dozen seniors were already hanging out in the lounge, ready to pounce on the slots once they were activated.

A friendly hostess from the Philippines greeted me and pointed out where a complimentary breakfast was being served.

The free buffet happened to be on Level 10, the top deck of the ship, known as “Club Bimini.” A DJ was already playing dance music. Two middle-age women danced to the beat. A group of tourists made toasts with mimosa-filled champagne flutes. Several women were already at the Aqua Bar, sipping drinks.

Instead of the buffet, I opted for Level 7 and the Sailfish Bistro, where

Continued on page 32

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Actual Unit View

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POINCIANA ISLAND 4 BR 3 BTH Approx 2659 SF

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\$399,000

Actual Unit View

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EASTERN SHORES / 2 BR 2 BTH

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



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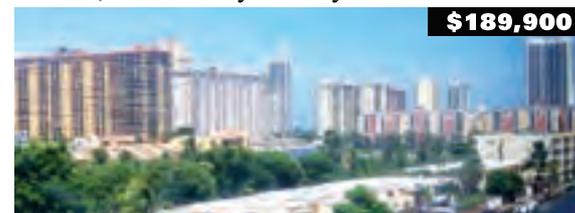
Actual Unit View

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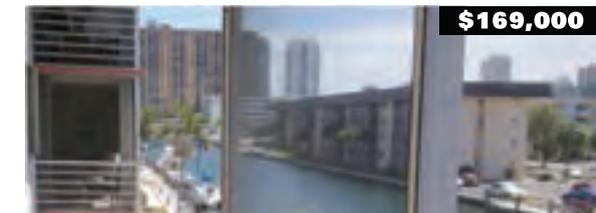


\$189,900

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Nice waterfront unit. Building located in the 24/7 guard-gated community. New bathrooms and new storm impact sliding doors. Just minutes to the beach. 55 and over building. Owner may hold first mortgage. Pool and Gym.

Cruising

Continued from page 30

I gathered a tasty plate of eggs, hash browns, sausage, bacon, and mixed rice, plus a cup of orange juice and a cup of coffee. Price: \$5.

A brief conversation the cashier revealed that 90 percent of crew members were Filipinos. "The owner, he likes our work," he said with evident pride.

By 9:15, we were on our way.

Being a Wednesday, there weren't many people aboard. I learned from a U.S. Customs agent that we were carrying about 250 passengers, which gave me hope that I'd actually have some time ashore to explore Genting's newly acquired resort. The frustrated online reviewers who journeyed on weekends complained that it took so long to pack people onto floating shuttles from ship to shore that they had barely two hours on Bimini.

The passengers were a mixed crowd of tourists and South Florida residents representing just about every ethnicity and nationality. Many took to the slots as soon as we crossed the three-mile limit.



Anchored off Bimini, big ship and little tender add up to long waits to get ashore.

Unlike in Las Vegas, complimentary liquor was not offered in the slot machine room. If you wanted a drink, you paid from \$5 to \$15 for a cocktail.

Drinking, lounging on deck chairs, dancing, or playing music trivia games with the hyperactive American entertainment officer, Susan Schleifer, seemed to be the preferred methods of entertainment. Many were here because

they managed to score free tickets. Others paid \$69 to celebrate the birthday of a companion, visit friends at Bimini, or on a whim.

A flight instructor said his student was using the Bimini trip as a means to renew his visa to the United States, so he decided to tag along. One grandmotherly lady, lounging with her family on the deck, drink in hand, said this was

her third *SuperFast* voyage. "I love it!" she chirped.

The slot machines were, by design no doubt, easy to find at the ship's entrance. The casino area with baccarat, roulette, blackjack, craps games, and sports-book wagering? That was tricky to find. You have to walk through a maze of cabin corridors before finally getting to it on Level 8 at the ship's stern. Genting attendants were at attention, televisions were broadcasting sporting events, a panoramic view of the ocean presented itself, and maybe ten people were gambling.

North Bimini is the largest of several islands that constitute the District of Bimini, home to 1600 full-time residents, who depend on fishing and tourism for their livelihoods, and a growing number of part-timers.

North Bimini is narrow, seven miles long and at many places just 700 feet wide. It's also the Bahamian island closest to Florida, about 54 miles from Miami.

Many a famous American has visited Bimini. Ernest Hemingway lived there

Continued on page 34

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Cruising

Continued from page 32

for a few years in the 1930s. The fishing attracted him, and a 500-pound marlin caught there supposedly inspired his *Old Man and the Sea*.

Martin Luther King, Jr., reportedly wrote his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech there in 1964. President Richard Nixon visited a few times. In 1984, Colorado Sen. Gary Hart sailed to Bimini from Aventura's Turnberry Isle Resort aboard the *Monkey Business*. His companion: aspiring Miami actress Donna Rice. The ensuing scandal ended Hart's presidential run.

What was it that attracted them to Bimini? Fine weather, blue water, a laid-back ambiance, great fishing, a few decent restaurants and bars — and that's about it.

"You don't have a lot of things to do over there if you don't have a boat," says José Vigil, owner of Miami Boat Charter, who divides his time between Miami's Upper Eastside and Bimini. "After a few days, it gets kind of boring."

Today Bimini is changing rapidly. A growth spurt began in the late 1990s,



Crammed together on the tender, waiting and sweating for your own safety.

when Gerardo Capo, a Miami-based businessman whose family owns the El Dorado furniture chain, developed Bimini Bay Resort, a community of 480 luxury villas.

Last year the Genting Group became Capo's partner. Then on March 18 of this year, ten days after Genting bought the *Bimini Superfast*, Bahamian Prime Minister

Perry Christie announced that Genting "had taken over the operation of Bimini Bay itself" and was investing \$150 million in Bimini to build a 350-room hotel and to expand the airport on North Bimini.

Genting's plans might also include the construction of a 1000-foot dock for the *Bimini Superfast* as well as the creation of a golf course. Or they might

not. Biminities and environmentalists complain that the Bahamian government won't release Genting's plans or the project's environmental studies.

Fred Smith, an attorney representing the Bimini Blue Coalition, an organization of Bimini residents and business owners, has threatened to seek a "judicial review" to stop overdevelopment.

"Everything that Bimini stands for is being destroyed," he was told *The Tribune*, a Bahamian newspaper, on September 22.

Some Biminities say they have reason to worry. Bahamian media reports and blogs are filled with complaints that the jobs they were promised are instead being taken by people living in Nassau and Freeport. Instead of using Bimini residents to build Bimini Bay, Capo hired cheap labor from Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

Some independent business owners are feeling shut out because Genting does not make it easy for *Bimini Superfast* passengers to shop locally. The ship loads people onto its ferries and herds

Continued on page 36



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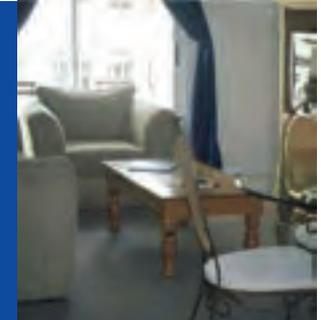


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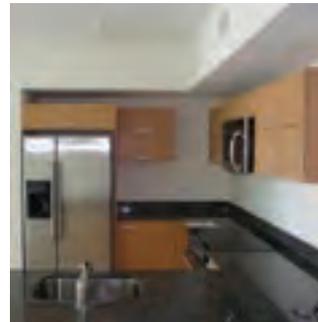


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Cruising

Continued from page 34

them directly to its resort and casino.

Meanwhile, the island's infrastructure is being overwhelmed by Genting's visitors, according to Smith. During busy days at the resort, Smith told *The Tribune*, water pressure is nonexistent in nearby towns, supplies are scarce, and sanitation is deplorable.

Then there's the disruption to the environment. Capo added 50 acres to North Bimini by dredging 2.5 million cubic yards out of a lagoon, digging a channel that was 150 feet wide and 20 feet deep, says Samuel Gruber, director of the Bimini Biological Field Station and a professor at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

"He cracked the aquifer and allowed sea water to penetrate the water table," Gruber says. "So the people no longer have free access to fresh water. They have to buy it from a big desalinization plant that Capo built."

(Neither Capo nor anyone affiliated with his company, RAV Bahamas, could



Resorts World trams will take you anywhere you want to go, except into town.

be reached for comment by deadline.)

Besides drinkable water, says Gruber, Capo's dredging decimated the mangroves of Mosquito Point, where more than 100 species of marine life dwelled. The effects disrupted the food chain, sickened juvenile lemon sharks, and killed off scores

of conch, fish, and lobster larvae.

Gruber says marine life eventually adapted to the new environment, but he's not sure that will be the case if Genting builds a golf course that will require large amounts of fertilizer, which will pollute the water. "They do that," Gruber says, "and that's the end."

Lloyd Edgecomb, general counsel for the Bimini district, cautions that Genting still hasn't formally applied to build either a cruise ship dock or a golf course. "Some people are jumping the gun," he says. "No permits have been pulled and no agreements have been signed off on."

However, when the prime minister, his cabinet, and Genting *do* make a decision regarding the project, there won't be much anyone can do about it, Edgecomb says. Under Bahamian law, it's the prime minister and his cabinet in Nassau who have final say over large projects funded by foreign interests.

"You can kick and scream until Christ comes," Edgecomb says, "and it won't mean anything."

Genting did not reply to written questions by deadline, although publicist Aaron Gordon says Genting is "awaiting final approvals on the jetty." Dana Leibovitz, president of Resorts World Bimini, told the Associated Press last month that the golf course is still being considered, but only if it's environmentally sound.

Continued on page 38

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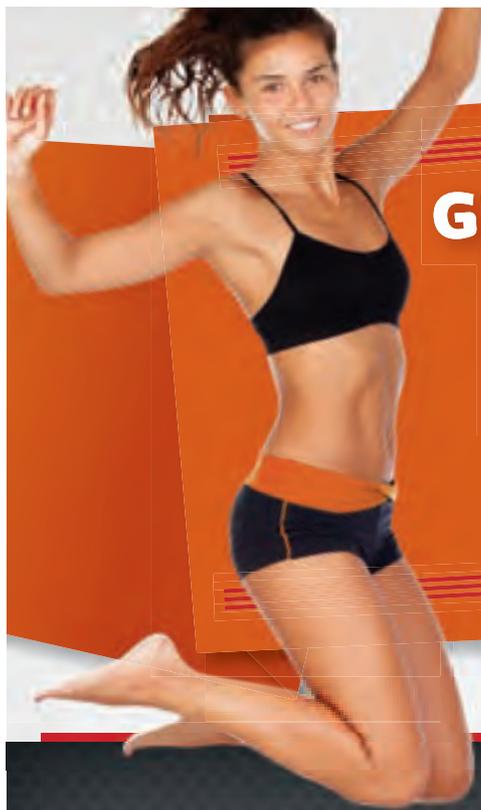
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Cruising

Continued from page 36

“We’re not here to ruin what Bimini is,” Leibovitz said. “We’re not here to ruin the water, we’re not here to ruin the pristine mangroves, the quaintness of the island. We want to integrate. We want to be part of the island, and we want to continue for that to be the main draw to the island.”

At 11:50 a.m. the ship stopped moving, about a mile off the coast of Bimini. That’s when the herding began.

The way out was through the casino, where where we waited and waited as passengers were slowly funneled into a narrow corridor leading to the exit. Once at the exit, the Filipino crew passed us on to a Bahamian crew on a red-and-white boat. A woman ordered us down into the boat’s lower level.

“Do we *have* to go downstairs?” a passenger asked.

“Yes,” she replied sternly, “for your own safety.”

So we went downstairs, sweated, and waited. A Genting employee walked



The beach scene: brilliant water, warm sun, plenty of drinks with umbrellas.

around with a tray of towels soaked in ice water.

Alone on this voyage, I was quickly adopted by a group of chatty women from New Jersey. Debbie, a hair dresser, was chipper thanks to downing five drinks and winning a few hundred

dollars at the slots, but the heat was trying her patience. I told her the weather service forecast 96 degrees today, with a heat index of 106. “Who are you?” she griped. “The Grim Reaper?”

Finally the boat began moving, slowly.

By the time we made it past Bahamian customs and were seated on an electric tram, it was 1:30 p.m. We had to be back at the pier by 3:30.

My first stop was the resort area. On one side of the road was a closed restaurant and an elaborate pool with a gazebo bar that was open for business. On the other side was the casino, which was so unimposing I almost missed it. “Oh, it’s bigger on the inside,” said a young employee, adding that Genting planned to build a larger casino at its future hotel.

The hardcore slots players from the *Bimini Superfast* were already filtering into the casino. I played a game of video poker just long enough to get a potent rum-and-Coke. Unlike the *Bimini Superfast*, drinks are gratis for those gambling in the casino. A rum-and-Coke at the bar was \$8. After losing \$3 at video poker, and a \$1 tip for the waitress, my drink cost \$4.

Now I wanted to see the beach. Another tram navigated the winding street, driving past construction workers laying the foundation for Genting’s Marina

Continued on page 40

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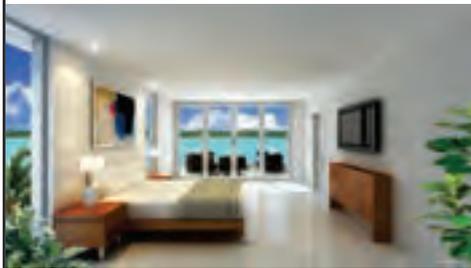
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Cruising

Continued from page 38

Hotel, and past a series of white wooden houses, some of which were being leased by Genting to *Bimini Superfast* passengers wishing to stay overnight: \$159 per person.

When I saw the beach, I patted myself on the back for wearing swim trunks under my kakis. The calm water felt fantastic. Most of my shipmates were content to lounge in the water with drinks in hand. Some rented jet skis or rode oversized floating tricycles on the water.

In all, we had about a half-hour at the beach before it was time to head back. Bahamian customs agents didn't bother to search us as we departed. That honor was reserved for Genting.

When we returned to the *Bimini Superfast*, we were guided down into the hot cargo hold. During the ship's *Superfast VI* days, this area carried up to 140 cars across the Mediterranean.

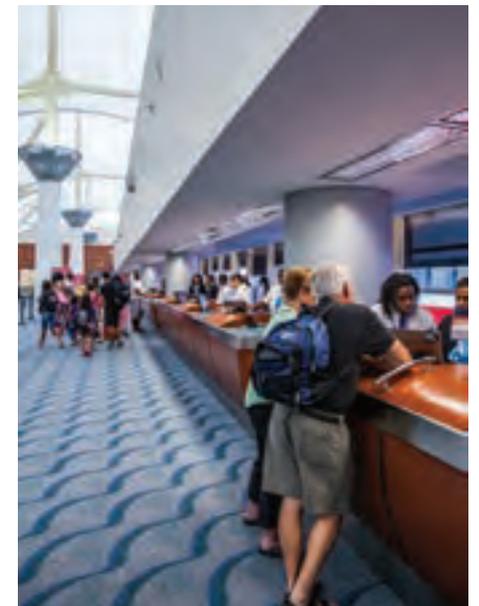
Now it housed a screening operation where passengers were quickly and politely checked for drugs and other contraband. There was even a security guard with a German shepherd. Also on hand were Genting's attentive Filipino workers, ready to assist heat-stroked travelers with water and chairs. Air circulation was provided by several humming fans.

Our time in the *Superfast's* hold lasted maybe 15 minutes. Then it was back to the top levels for music, food, drinks, and gambling.

Under Bahamian law, it's illegal for a Bahamian citizen or a work-permit holder to gamble at a casino. A proposal to legalize Internet cafés, known as web shops, that acted as illicit casinos for locals was rejected by voters in January, thanks to an aggressive campaign by Bahamian churches.

In spite of the victory for the anti-gaming side, some Bahamians are grumbling about the current casino law, believing it makes them second-class citizens in their own country, according to media reports. But John Kindt, a professor of business at the University of Illinois and a fierce opponent of gambling, says the local gaming ban actually *protects* the Bahamian economy from casinos.

Several nations around the world with casinos either forbid their residents from entering or, in the case of Singapore, where Genting operates a casino called Resorts World Sentosa, require a hefty admission price, Kindt explains.



The terminal at Port Miami is nice, but by the time you disembark, you won't want to linger.

Measures like that are in place to prevent citizens from losing all their money at casinos. "They know that slot machines can kill the local economy," Kindt says. "It's all about suckers coming in from the outside."

Kindt contends that the real goal of casino operators like Genting is to get people addicted to slot machines, what he calls the "crack cocaine of gambling."

Kindt also believes that the ultimate objective of the *Bimini Superfast* is not just to ferry Miami residents and tourists to Resorts World Bimini, but to pave the way for a casino at a future Resorts World Miami.

"The real trick is a downtown Miami casino," Kindt says. "They will do whatever strategy it takes to get that."

Genting has been more successful expanding elsewhere in the United States. Since 2009, the company has helped finance four gaming operations in the Northeast. In August 2010, Genting built a casino at the Aqueduct racetrack in New York City, now known as Resorts World New York.

Genting's most recent gaming endeavor might be its most dramatic. In March, the same month it was solidifying its presence in Bimini, company executives took over the Echelon Las Vegas project from Boyd Gaming and declared their intent to invest up to \$7 billion to build Resorts World Las Vegas, a 3500-room, Asian-themed resort.

"They seem to have an insatiable appetite for penetrating the U.S. market,"

Continued on page 42

DEC 13,14,15

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Cruising

Continued from page 40

says Alex Calderone, senior vice president of the Fine Point Group, a Las Vegas-based gaming consultancy.

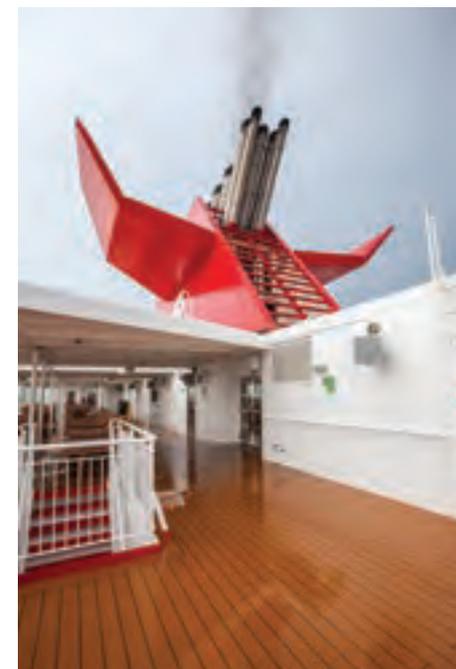
The speed with which Genting launched the *Bimini Superfast* may be aiding that penetration. Among the vessel's features is a reception desk where passengers are offered Genting Rewards Cards, which offer incentives based on how long someone gambles.

In exchange, customers allow Genting to track their gaming preferences and also provides the company with home addresses and e-mails. "The benefit to them is that this gives them a head start in growing a database," Calderone says. "They can tap into that big database and use it to entice customers to come and gamble at their properties."

Once Resorts World Miami is able to open a casino, that database will allow Genting immediately to tap into South Florida's lucrative gambling market. If not, the database collected by the *Bimini Superfast* will enable Genting to tap into it anyway. "Southern Florida in particular is a densely populated region where the historical records have shown us that Floridians gamble, as do tourists who come to Florida," Calderone says. "Genting's way of carving out a piece of the pie for itself is to be able to offer people to take a day trip on a high-speed boat to an exotic location."

Last year Dana Leibovitz of Resorts World Bimini told the *Miami Herald* that Bimini had little if anything to do with Miami. "This is a totally separate project," he said, "and has nothing to do with Florida and what we're doing there."

It was 6:00 p.m. by the time *Bimini Superfast* docked at Port Miami. The slot machines shut down. Soon the



Is the *Bimini SuperFast* a corporate Trojan Horse, ready to invade Miami?

casino bar would be closed as well. Yet it would be more than an hour before passengers were allowed to disembark.

Part of the problem: There were fewer than five U.S. Customs agents available to process 250 passengers.

"This isn't worth it," sighed one woman. "I liked the cruise. I liked Bimini. But I didn't get to spend much time there. And all this waiting all the time. It just isn't worth the \$69."

When I finally left Terminal H, it was after 7:30. I bumped into some of the hardcore slots players. Even though they rarely ventured beyond the casinos, they said they had a great time.

They didn't have to pay for tickets. This trip was a gift from their Broward church congregation, a reward for their volunteer work.

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Two Villages Facing a Common Threat: Home Invasions

Miami Shores and El Portal battle crime and communication complications

By Christian Cipriani
BT Contributor

With handguns drawn, two hooded men approached Alejandro Ortiz in front of his house on NE 101st Street in Miami Shores. They smashed the cell phone he was using, led him inside, and took several hundred dollars in belongings from him and his wife, Alysia.

Five days later, something similar happened to José and Ileana Forment as they sat in their car outside their Shores home on NE 95th Street — their six-year-old disabled daughter in the back seat, unable to speak.

Just 24 hours later, police believe the same intruders showed up outside the home of Alejandro and Diana Amador, on NE 89th Street in El Portal. This time they weren't in a hurry. After ordering the couple to lie face-down on their bed alongside their six-year-old daughter, they asked for credit cards and PIN numbers. One of the assailants helped himself to bottled water and chocolate. It would be hours, the couple says, before the men left.

By October 4, El Portal police had a suspect in custody — 20-year-old John Eric Beaubrun of Miami Gardens. He was charged with criminal use of a



Retired crime reporter (and avid angler) Arnold Markowitz says public information and transparency should be priorities.

person's identity and for theft, but not armed robbery. He's just the guy they caught using the stolen cards.

Eugene Morales, chief of the El Portal police department, says they're working with Miami Shores police and the U.S. Attorney's office to build a case against Beaubrun, and to get more information about his accomplices.

Miami Shores police chief Kevin Lystad calls the arrest the tip of the iceberg. Investigators will not divulge

details, but up to seven other suspects may still be at large.

Beaubrun's listed address is a \$150,000 house in Miami Gardens on a large lot — not much smaller or less valuable than the Amador's house in El Portal. In fact, if the people who carried out these robberies are at all like Beaubrun, they won't have long rap sheets and weren't desperate for cash.

Continued on page 50

North Miami City Council Blindsided by Oleta

Contaminated fill can remain at Biscayne Landing for now

By Mark Sell
BT Contributor

In the ongoing environmental mess over Biscayne Landing and the old Munisport toxic dump on which it sits, former North Miami Mayors Joe Celestin and Frank Wolland are the men of the hour — Celestin for blowing the whistle and Wolland for spreading the word.

As a result, all hell broke loose at the North Miami City Council meeting October 24, in this ongoing saga concerning the delivery by developers Oleta Partners of 194,000 cubic yards of contaminated dirt. It was brought to Biscayne Landing earlier this year from the massive Brickell CitiCentre construction

project — over the objections of site manager Celestin.

The city council has unanimously voted to hire an independent scientist to monitor Biscayne Landing for toxins, to be paid by the developer. This will surely not be the end of it.

The news could not have come at a worse time: County environmental inspectors from the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER, until recently known as DERM) have been fanning out across Miami, checking for contaminated soil in parks in the wake of toxic discoveries at Blanche Park and Merrie Christmas Park in Coconut Grove.

The issue is also awkward because in August the council approved a spine



Attorney and former Mayor Frank Wolland with contaminated dirt in the background: "Let them take it out."

road for the site, unaware of environmental concerns. Big money is on the line for both the developers and the city. The massive project calls for more than 4000 apartments or condos, more than 800,000 square feet of retail, and a town

center for its 10,000 to 15,000 residents.

Mayor Lucie Tondreau, Vice Mayor Scott Galvin, and Councilwoman Carol Keys were noticeably unhappy at the

Continued on page 48

BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

New District, New Voters, New Influence

Four candidates are campaigning for Miami's District 5 commission seat, and Upper Eastside voters could pick the winner

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

A quartet of candidates is running for District 5 commissioner in the City of Miami. In alphabetical order, they are:

- Jacquetta “Jacqui” Colyer, an administrator with the Children’s Trust, former regional director of the Department of Children and Families, and a respected figure in Miami’s philanthropic community.

- Richard Dunn, Jr., pastor of Faith Community Baptist Church who touts his previous experience as a Miami commissioner and boasts of support from at least two of the city’s elected officials, including commission chairman Marc Sarnoff.

- Keon Hardemon, a young public defender who is part of Liberty City’s influential Hardemon family. He has the support of outgoing District 5 Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, a very popular figure in the district.

- Robert Malone, Jr., an interventionist for the public school system and the president of the Hadley Park Homeowners Association. His independent streak has earned him the support of some Upper Eastside activists.

You’ll be able to meet them all on October 8 at 7:00 p.m. during a candidates’ forum at Legion Memorial Park, 6447 NE 7th Ave. The event will be hosted by the Belle Meade Homeowners Association and moderated by BT editor and publisher Jim Mullin.

And, on November 5, if you’re a registered voter residing in Shorecrest, Palm Grove, Belle Meade, or Bayside, you’ll have a chance to cast your vote for one of the candidates.

Those neighborhoods comprise much of Miami’s Upper Eastside, a multiethnic and largely middle-class area straddling Biscayne Boulevard from NE 36th Street to the city limits at NE 87th Street.

The entire Upper Eastside was once part of District 2, represented by Commissioner Marc Sarnoff. That changed a few months ago, when federally mandated redistricting resulted in all neighborhoods north of NE 61st Street being transferred to District 5, which also encompasses the impoverished and largely black communities of Overtown, Liberty City, and Little Haiti.

According to the county’s elections department, District 5 now has 42,000 registered voters, just 5700 of whom live in the Upper Eastside. However, Upper Eastside neighborhoods have had higher voter turnout in past city elections than those in the original District 5.

Chris Norwood, a political consultant and District 5 resident who is not involved in any of the four candidates’ campaigns, says high turnout means greater leverage for the Upper Eastside. “They [the Upper Eastside] are the x-factor,” he notes. “I believe that community will dictate, in a big way, who will be the next District 5 commissioner.”

Upper Eastside voters will likely support the same candidate, Norwood predicts: “I’ve got a feeling that the former District 2 will vote as a bloc, whether consciously or unconsciously. They’ll overwhelmingly back one candidate over the rest.”

In that case, it’s almost certain that no one candidate will receive more than 50 percent of the vote on November 5, Norwood says, which means the election will be settled in a run-off on November 19.

If there is a run-off election, Upper Eastsiders will once again go to the polls at a higher rate than the rest of District 5, Norwood adds. They’ll also vote as a bloc again: “Their impact will be even more prominent in a run-off.”

Many Upper Eastside residents were displeased with the redistricting process earlier this year. They believe that city officials, especially Spence-Jones and



Jacquetta “Jacqui” Colyer



Richard Dunn, Jr.



Keon Hardemon



Robert Malone

Manatee Bend Park: Open for Business

On August 29, Manatee Bend Park was officially dedicated. The park, located on the Little River just west of Biscayne Boulevard, has a fascinating history and a bright future. To read more, and to see photos from the event, go to Community News at www.biscaynetimes.com.

Sarnoff, ignored their pleas to keep the Upper Eastside together — either in District 2 or District 5.

“We could have a significant impact on the election of District 5,” says Jack Spirk, a Shorecrest resident for the past 13 years. “I think that’s why

Commissioner Spence-Jones didn’t want to include all of the Upper Eastside in her district.”

As for Sarnoff, “I think he kicked us to the curb when it came to redistricting.”

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District 5

Continued from page 45

says Spirk, a former Sarnoff supporter. “I was really disappointed.”

All four candidates are running on platforms that emphasize jobs, economic development, and public safety — particularly in Overtown and Liberty City, where crime and poverty are widespread. Not surprisingly, they also vow to represent the interests of Upper Eastside residents at city hall.

Keon Hardemon, age 30, is the youngest of the quartet and is seen, along with the Rev. Richard Dunn, as a front-runner by most city hall observers.

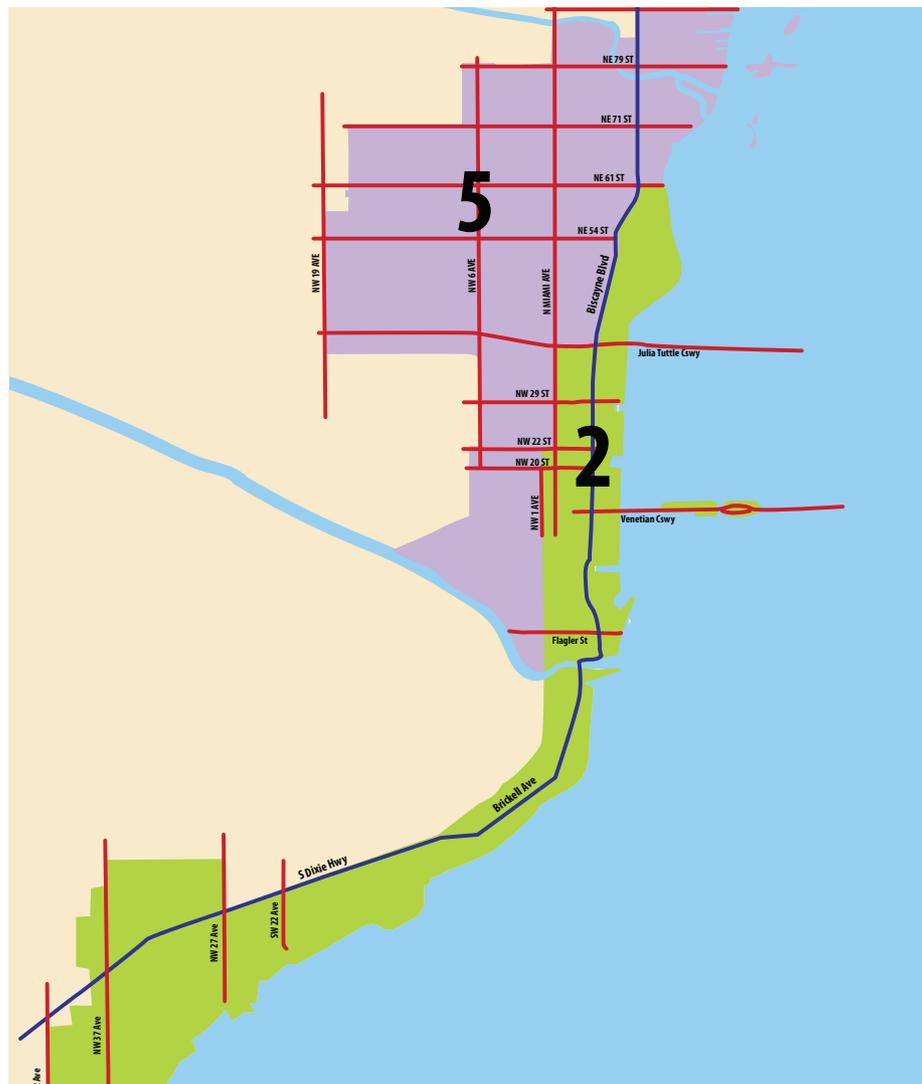
“I’m running because I really want to help Miami become a real world-class city,” says Hardemon, who unsuccessfully ran against county Commissioner Audrey Edmonson last year.

If elected, Hardemon says, public safety will be among his highest priorities. (His mother is a Miami police officer.) He also wants to promote development in District 5 while protecting the historic integrity of Overtown, Buena Vista, and the Upper Eastside.

Hardemon says his background as an attorney with the Office of the Public Defender prepared him for city hall. “I have the experience and the skills to move the community forward,” he says.

Hardemon’s strongest supporters are his family members. His aunt and uncle, Billy and Barbara Hardemon, have been high-profile Liberty City activists since the 1980 McDuffie riots. They also had a knack for bringing out the black vote.

While Keon Hardemon was in school or away in college, his family members were being hired as political aides and lobbyists. Two of his uncles were arrested. In 1996, Billy Hardemon, then an aide to county commissioner



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- Visit miamidade.gov/elections for more details

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Biscayne Landing

Continued from page 44

council meeting. Scrutiny will increase and heads may roll, and the matter will come up again at the October 8 meeting.

True to form, Galvin provided the quote of the evening, tearing into Oleta Partners (for overriding Celestin and trucking in the materials); RER/DERM (for approving the haul February 5 and March 11, before rescinding it on May 31); and particularly city manager Stephen Johnson (for not telling the council months earlier).

“Oleta Partners, shame on you!” Galvin shouted. “City management, shame on you! DERM, shame on you! The time to have had this discussion is not tonight, after you’ve been caught with your hand in the cookie jar.... All these months, you’ve all known you’ve been endangering the health of our residents!”

Galvin commended Celestin for his early stand against delivery of the materials, and Wolland for relaying details of the October 12 RER/DERM Environmental Quality Control Board meeting,

at which Oleta Partners sought a variance to keep the delivered fill there for now — despite the violation of Chapter 24 of the Miami-Dade County Environmental Code, which mandates a clean fill, free of contaminants, and restricts the release of polluted material into water.

They argued that Biscayne Landing has a remediation program on-site and the county has not found any contaminants to be at unsafe levels, despite excessive levels of aluminum.

Herb Tillman, executive vice president of Oleta Partners, was present at the RER board meeting and was represented by Kerri Barsh, of law firm Greenberg Traurig’s environmental practice group.

Celestin and Johnson were there as well, but the City of North Miami had no lawyer present. Wolland, who was representing a client on a separate matter, was surprised to see Biscayne Landing on the agenda.

With no lawyer at hand and the unmistakable scent of potential litigation in the air (might Oleta Partners sue the county for the \$1.5 million cost of removing the fill and the estimated \$6 million cost of

finding a place that would accept it because it had initially approved the delivery?), Johnson, representing the city, deferred to both Oleta Partners and to RER/DERM, and said the issue called for more independent scientific study and clearer protocols.

“The solution is simple,” says Wolland, who preceded Celestin as mayor in the 1990s. “They put it there. It took them a couple months. They bragged that they have millions.... Let them take it out and put clean fill on the site, instead of putting dirty fill on the site and trying to figure out how they should clean it up.”

Wolland called Mayor Tondreau, who was not pleased. Had Wolland not told her, she said in an interview before the October 24 city council meeting, “it would have been swept under the rug without anyone knowing about it.”

At the council meeting, Tondreau cited concerns about public health and safety. “We want to put residents at ease, that there is no immediate danger to them, that there is no question mark,” she said before the 5-0 vote. “We want to make sure everybody is safe.”

In agreeing to assume the costs of a new study, Tillman said, “We’ve tested the dickens out of this material, and we’re fine with that.”

So just what is in that contaminated fill? In the words of environmental lawyer and activist Maureen Harwitz, a “witches’ brew” of toxins — including lead, arsenic, aluminum, and silicate — that one often finds in construction slag, which RER/DERM measured at 8.6 percent of the total fill.

Only one ingredient — aluminum — rose to a level the county deemed unacceptable. Wilbur Mayorga, chief of the RER/DERM’s Environmental Monitoring and Restoration Division, concluded that the aluminum levels were not sufficient to be a health hazard. Mayorga is also leading the monitoring of the City of Miami’s parks.

Under questioning from the council, Celestin said that he would recommend removing the fill from the site, despite the costs and complications. That showed courage; his \$250,000 yearly contract as Biscayne Landing site manager is split

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

Home Invasions

Continued from page 44

One of the victims, Alejandro Ortiz, says they seemed more like young amateur gangsters carrying out crimes of opportunity. They drove around, saw someone distracted and vulnerable, took what they could, and got out.

Whatever their motive, these criminals have put both villages on high alert and desperate for answers. People are also asking for more consistent and detailed communication from civic leaders.

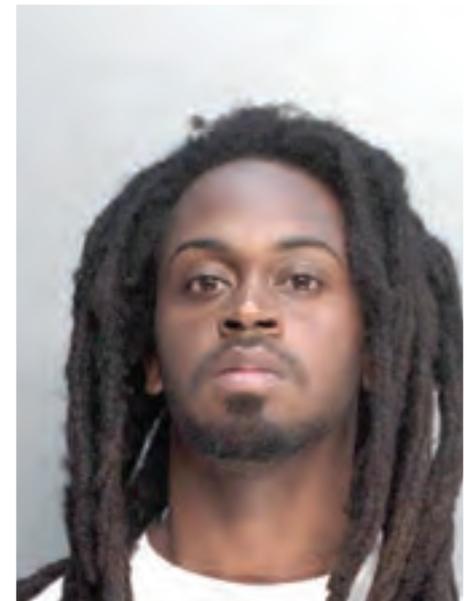
Miami Shores residents can sign up for "Nixle alerts" that go to their phone and e-mail when an incident occurs. El Portal doesn't use Nixle, a free service for schools and public safety agencies, but residents can join Nextdoor.com, a social media site for neighborhoods.

Both platforms were used in the wake of the thefts, but it's unclear how many people they reached. There were a few articles tucked into the middle pages of the *Miami Herald's* North Central "Neighbors" section, as well as several official and informal public information meetings.

Retired *Herald* crime reporter and long-time Miami Shores resident Arnold Markowitz doesn't believe communication was adequate in the wake of these crimes. He wants better systems and procedures in place that disseminate more details.

"How many people even read the village website?" Markowitz asks.

What the Shores did post, he says, was too vague, like an August 30 message urging residents to "remain calm, yet continue to use caution and take preemptive measures," and the October 4 arrest announcement that said simply: "An arrest has been made in connection with the recent home invasion robberies." It offered no details.



John Eric Beaubrun was charged with using stolen credit cards, not for the home invasions.

Markowitz calls this either reluctance or indifference to providing detailed, actionable information. He also thinks the news media are neglectful in their coverage of Miami Shores crime, noting that these aren't the first incidents this year.

Several residents at public meetings voiced the need for more wide-reaching, high-tech communications. El Portal isn't on Facebook, and the Miami Shores Facebook page just links to information posted on the village website. Neither village hall nor their police departments have Twitter accounts.

Several weeks after he and his wife became the thieves' first victims, Alejandro Ortiz is sitting at Metro Bistro restaurant, speaking about what happened in the house he and Alysia have shared in Miami Shores for the past three years.

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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

District 5

Continued from page 46

supporting his candidacy. (Both commissioners confirm they're supporting Dunn.)

"He's very good commissioner," Sarnoff says, adding that Dunn has vision, experience, and "knows how to get things done." Besides raising money for Dunn, Sarnoff says he's knocking on doors with him in the Upper Eastside. Sarnoff is also confident that Dunn will win. "Based on poll results, Dunn is significantly ahead of the rest of the field," he says.

Dunn has some baggage. Back in 1991, he resigned as assistant pastor of Drake Memorial Baptist Church after his own grandfather asserted that he used church funds to pay for personal bills, according to the *Miami Herald*. (Dunn told the *Herald* the money was paid back.)

This past August, *Miami New Times* reported that Dunn's wife, Daphne, has filed for bankruptcy, is \$419,000 in debt, and their Liberty City home is under the threat of foreclosure.

Dunn insists he has never been accused of any wrongdoing in relation to his time in office — unlike Spence-Jones. "I have had the opportunity to serve without any embarrassments, without any questions of my integrity, for 19 months," he says.

Some Upper Eastside activists who harbor doubts about Hardemon or Dunn and their ties to Spence-Jones and Sarnoff, respectively, are supporting 45-year-old Robert Malone.

"My stance in politics is that it's always the lesser of evils," says Ken Jett, president of the Shorecrest Homeowners Association and the *BT*'s Upper Eastside correspondent. "Malone isn't part of the

current regime at city hall and he doesn't have any of the strikes against him that the others have."

Armed with a doctorate in education, Malone, of Hadley Park in Liberty City, works as a substitute teacher and as interventionist for at-risk youth for Miami-Dade Public Schools. He's been campaigning since April, which has given him time to attend neighborhood association meetings throughout District 5.

"I just see an opportunity for better leadership in the City of Miami," says Malone, who previously ran for city commissioner and state representative. "There are too many things that are going on that need to be improved."

Malone says he wants to improve the water and sewer infrastructure of District 5, audit the Community Re-development Agency, fix the 311 call system meant to assist residents with city services, and encourage development in blighted neighborhoods.

Besides running against three opponents, Malone is also running against Sarnoff. This past August Sarnoff asked Malone to meet him at his law office, the candidate tells the *BT*. Malone arrived with two members of his campaign staff. There, according to Malone, Sarnoff explained that he was supporting Dunn because "he's a guaranteed second vote" on the commission dais for Sarnoff's proposals.

"I asked him what he wanted for Christmas and he replied, 'Two yes votes,'" Malone says. "He [Sarnoff] said, 'That's why I'm supporting Dunn. He's basically a guaranteed vote.'"

Hector Roos, Malone's campaign manager, who was present at the meeting, claims that Sarnoff explained he

Continued on page 54

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Home Invasions

Continued from page 50

After living all over the world, the young Puerto Rican wine importer and his Oklahoma-born wife returned to South Florida looking for a neighborhood with true character. They were drawn immediately to the quaint Americana of Miami Shores.

“Three days after we moved in, the mailwoman introduced herself,” Ortiz recalls. “It really is that kind of place.”

He speaks well of the village police. They call him every few days with updates on his case. They know his name. He can get the chief on the phone.

“Try doing that in Miami or unincorporated Dade,” he notes. “People want information, but it’s an ongoing investigation. If it’s five to seven people, I’ll wait for the case to be built. That takes time. TV shows have created unrealistic expectations of police work.”

But as others have echoed publicly, Ortiz agrees that Miami Shores could do a better job communicating with residents on common digital platforms.

He also sees a more controversial dimension to the conversation. “Every media report about this seemed uncomfortable talking about race,” he says.

For Ortiz, it’s not just race we tiptoe around, but also economic status. In Miami Shores, a community Ortiz describes as woefully segregated, he sees the need for broader and more frank conversations. Rather than play the victim, he sees this as a teachable moment whose lesson is getting lost.

To predominately white Miami Shores, the idea of young, hooded black men coming to rob their village has many in a palpable state of fear. Ortiz does not share this fear. “I

don’t own guns,” he says, “but all of my neighbors do — and more than one gun.” Had his assailants targeted a well-armed neighbor, things may have ended much differently.

While law enforcement tries to get Beaubrun to deliver the actual perpetrators, more incidents are coming to light, especially in El Portal.

A woman who asked only to be identified as Marisa lives on NE 88th Street, just off NE 4th Avenue — less than two blocks from the police station. Recently her fiancé returned one night while she was out of town to find the house burglarized. The only village police officer on duty took more than an hour to arrive, according to Marisa.

“You would think living in a small community like El Portal that you’d get personal attention,” she says, “but it hasn’t been the case.”

Unlike the support Alejandro Ortiz receives from Miami Shores, Marisa says the police never called her to follow up. In the incident’s clumsy aftermath, neighbors began talking about how many burglaries were really happening, so Marisa showed up at the police station to request public records. She was peppered with questions.

“They asked for a lot of personal information — where I work, where I live,” she recalls. “They even tried to charge more than the statute allows for records requests.”

Her discoveries were unsettling: El Portal had a long hot summer, with at least 28 burglaries since May 1 in a village of just 850 occupied homes. That’s more than one per week. She speculates that police, for their own reasons, have kept these burglaries quiet.

Since then, Marisa and her fiancé have quietly put their house on the market.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com






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Community News: BISCAYNE CORRIDOR

District 5

Continued from page 52

needed Dunn's vote to phase out affordable housing in District 5 and replace it with market-rate residential projects.

"I left the meeting disappointed and angry," Malone says. "The whole day it really bothered me."

A few days later, Malone says, one of his staffers collected three \$500 campaign checks from Sarnoff, along with a message that there was more where that came from. The next morning Malone personally returned the checks to Sarnoff's commission office.

"What you just said is not true," Sarnoff tells the *BT*, in reference to the campaign checks, not wishing to elaborate further.

Sarnoff acknowledges that he's often joked about wanting two votes for Christmas in order to advance his legislation (the Miami City Commission has five members), but denies ever stating that Dunn was one of those holiday gifts.

Says Sarnoff: "Dunn is his own man and he always votes his own way."

Sarnoff also says that Malone misinterpreted his statements about affordable housing. The commissioner explains he pointed out that the *entire* City of Miami has 66 percent of Miami-Dade County's affordable housing projects, about 488 acres in all.

Since most affordable housing isn't taxed, the city loses out on some \$3 million a year in revenue. "We need to be aware of it," Sarnoff declares, insisting that he never suggested replacing affordable housing with market-rate projects.

So why ask for the meeting at all? Sarnoff says he wanted to find out what Malone was all about, just as he had done in a meeting with Hardemon. Unlike Hardemon, a candidate Sarnoff believes is qualified to be commissioner, Malone has "no vision."

"I'm not supporting Malone because he couldn't evoke a vision for his

Continued on page 55

Biscayne Landing

Continued from page 48

evenly between the city and Oleta Partners. The contract has been for a three-year term, subject to annual review.

In correspondence and testimony, Celestin said the fill had been dumped into a lake, thus placing it within 17 feet of the Biscayne Bay Aquifer, South Florida's main source of fresh water. He also was worried about aluminum and silicate in the air. Oleta Partners accommodated him earlier this year by bulldozing the 50-foot mounds of fill down to 25 feet.

The issue goes beyond North Miami. Highland Village in North Miami Beach is within 100 feet of the site's south side, with 1500 low- to middle-income

residents. In the 1980s and 1990s, residents had complained of health problems and petitioned, unsuccessfully, for the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a health study. While the site is significantly cleaner now, Highland Village remains a concern.

At this point, Oleta Partners, led by developer Michael Swerdlow, has plenty of pull. Its team includes top environmental and land-use lawyer Clifford Schulman; the former director of the Miami-Dade solid waste department; the former director of the Miami-Dade Department of Planning and Zoning; and longtime veterans of RER/DERM, among others.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Community News: **BISCAYNE CORRIDOR**

community,” Sarnoff elaborates. “You only get so much time with a person, and if, during that time, he can’t state a vision, why [support him]? Because he’s a good-looking, nice guy?”

Sarnoff has yet to meet with Jacqui Colyer, whose résumé includes high-level administrative positions at the Children’s Trust, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Lockheed Martin’s workforce division, and Miami-Dade County’s Housing Department.

Colyer, an Oakland Grove resident who wouldn’t disclose her age to the *BT*, says she’s running because “I believe the future of this district is so important.” If elected, Colyer vows to conduct a comprehensive study “to determine the needs and challenges facing District 5.”

During her first 100 days in office, Colyer promises to collaborate with county and state officials to build workforce housing on District 5’s many empty lots, bring youth programs to District 5’s parks, and place police in Miami’s high crime areas. She also wants to rid the Upper Eastside of prostitution once and for all. “My platform is all about the future, all about hope, all about real accountability,” she says.

But Colyer’s skeptics point out that she left DCF following the brutal murder of ten-year-old Nubia Barahona in 2011 by her adoptive father. Two employees of DCF, which had received warnings that Barahona and her brother were in danger, were fired for mishandling the case. Five other employees, including Colyer, received reprimands, although DCF secretary David Wilkins noted at the time that Colyer “is part of the solution” to the agency’s problems.

The Miami DCF office “had direct oversight of hundreds of kids and we unfortunately lost one,” Colyer says. “We were saddened by that, and it’s part

of what I think about every day. Now, through my work at the Children’s Trust, we have [child-abuse] prevention programs in place.”

Seth Gordon, a publicist and former advisor to Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, says victory in the District 5 race will go to the candidate whose *negative* campaign tactics are most effective, who can generate rumors, circulate damaging campaign fliers and signs, and air negative commercials. As for actual votes, brokers of absentee ballots will play a role, too.

Cynical? Perhaps, says Gordon, but realistic: “That’s how elections are decided. It’s not about who has the finest platform or the best character.”

Going negative can be pricey, so the ability to raise money is critical. As of the *BT*’s press deadline, Dunn had a campaign chest of \$20,865 while Malone reported raising only \$100. Hardemon (who entered the race in July) and Colyer (whose candidacy launched in August) reported no cash being raised. The next batch of campaign finance reports is due on October 4.

Gordon believes Hardemon will have a decent campaign account thanks to Spence-Jones’s support. Dunn’s fundraising will benefit from his association with Sarnoff, Gort, and Mayor Tomás Regalado (who, Gordon says, is a friend of Dunn).

Yet Gordon doubts that endorsements from politicians or community leaders will be a factor in the District 5 election. “That might work in a place like Boston,” he says, “where an elected official can get his supporters to support a candidate he’s for. But we don’t have that kind of transferable political clout here. Politicians in Miami come and go so fast that no one gets to know them.”

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Aventura, City of Pettiness

No slight too small to redraft the past

By **Jay Beskin**
BT Contributor

Anthony Lewis passed away several months ago. He was one of America's foremost writers on the First Amendment. This is what he had to say about the right to free speech:

"Ours is the most outspoken society on earth. Americans are freer to think what we will and say what we think than any other people, and freer today than in the past. We can bare the secrets of government and the secrets of the bedroom. We can denounce our rulers, and each other, with little fear of the consequences. There is almost no chance that a court will stop us from publishing what we wish: in print, on the air, or on the

Web. Hateful and shocking expression, political or artistic, is almost all free to enter the marketplace of ideas."

Expression is almost all free to enter the marketplace of ideas — everywhere that is, except in Aventura.

A number of years ago, then Commissioner Arthur Berger suggested that the city create an archive of documents and photos chronicling the history of Aventura. City manager Eric Soroka wasn't keen on the idea because it would divert personnel from addressing more pressing management issues, and Berger's idea was never adopted by the city commission.

Unlike governments in surrounding municipalities, ours has never had much interest in creating the sense of communal pride that can be bolstered by shared



BT photo by Silvia Ros

history. After all, Aventura was only the second community in Miami-Dade County whose residents revolted against county oppression and took control of their destiny. That fact alone should impart civic pride in all of us. Numerous unincorporated areas followed our example.

So in December 2008, when Soroka and Mayor Susan Gottlieb decided to commission a book on Aventura's history, it seemed quite possible that our government was coming around. They chose Seth Bramson to write the book.

Bramson, who teaches Florida history at Florida International University

and Barry University, is known for his well-regarded histories of the Florida East Coast Railway and of South Florida cities, such as Miami Beach, Hallandale Beach, and the Curtiss-Bright cities of Hialeah, Miami Springs, and Opa-locka. He received recognition from the leaders of the City of Miami for chronicling that city. On behalf of Aventura, Soroka and Gottlieb committed to underwrite the publication of 500 books.

After Bramson submitted his draft to Soroka and Gottlieb, they invited him to what he thought would be a routine meeting to discuss it. At that meeting,

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according to Bramson, Soroka and Gottlieb blindsided him.

They had essentially rewritten his book, deleting chapters and pictures, and eviscerating the substance of his work. Never before had leaders of a city profiled in one of Bramson's books censored its contents.

Soroka and Gottlieb conditioned the city's underwriting commitment to Bramson's agreement to their changes. Bramson refused, and the city withdrew its commitment. Subsequently, Bramson obtained an identical underwriting commitment for the book from the Lebowitz family of Pittsburgh, members of which were among the original partners in Turnberry.

No member of the Lebowitz family sought editorial changes to the manuscript. That book was ready to go to press when a major event occurred.

The former principal of Aventura's city-owned charter school (Aventura City of Excellence School, or ACES), Katherine Murphy, had sued the city and Soroka for wrongful termination and harassment. On November 2, 2012, a Miami-Dade jury found for Murphy and awarded her \$155,737,000, one of the

largest judgments ever rendered against a municipality and its chief officer.

Bramson believed it was important that the book take notice of this episode and added a chapter detailing the events. He was scrupulous in his accounting of the lawsuit, citing original and secondary sources, and noting that the trial judge in the case had quickly overturned the jury's verdict in its entirety. He also wrote that Murphy had appealed the judge's decision, and that the appeal would be pending at the time of publication. He made no editorial comments about the merits of the case.

Bramson is an engaging man whose work has brought him friendships throughout South Florida. So he thought little of disclosing the new chapter to Elaine Adler, president of the Aventura Marketing Council and unofficial official doyenne of all things communal and charitable in our city. Adler, ever protective of Soroka, beseeched Bramson not to publish the new chapter. And then the proverbial stuff hit the fan.

This past August our city attorney (who is employs Soroka's son) used the taxpayers' dime to write a letter to

Bramson's publisher. The letter stated that "the City has not authorized Mr. Bramson to write a history of the city or to use photos, papers, or other property of the city in the proposed book."

The city attorney's letter is disingenuous. Since when does the subject of a book have to authorize its publication? If that were the case, the publication of many nonfiction books, including biographies, would essentially cease.

Under what statute or theory does a city have exclusive ownership of photos and papers in its possession? What happened to the public records laws under which anyone has the right to review and copy municipal papers and records?

Despite the ludicrousness of the letter, it had the desired chilling effect. Bramson's publisher, not wishing to face a lawsuit, bailed. The City of Excellence, many of whose residents descend from the People of the Book, may have no book.

While Opa-locka, Hialeah, Surfside, El Portal, North Miami, and most other municipalities in Miami-Dade have a historical chronicle, Aventura may have none.

Some months ago I wrote a column about the Murphy lawsuit. To say that it

pleased no city officials, including the manager, would be an understatement. They would lie to keep our residents in the dark about this episode.

Shortly after the column appeared, the Aventura Cultural Arts Center abruptly ended its advertising relationship with *Biscayne Times*, which was providing ads at cost.

When our publisher asked arts center management for an explanation, they were evasive. But we all know why. We are no longer the City of Excellence. We have become the City of Pettiness.

Apparently in our city, the reputation of a manager trumps the First Amendment. The role of the city attorney has morphed into representation of the manager, not the city itself. Or just maybe the manager has *become* the city.

I hope that Bramson finds a publisher for his book. Even if one has little interest in the history of Aventura, we should all buy the book because we have an interest in upholding the right to free speech.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Open Letter to the Miami Shores Publix

I'm back, I'm sorry, I can't live without you

By **Jen Karetnick**
BT Contributor

Dear Publix: You're probably surprised to hear from me. I confess this letter has been harder to write than I thought. But the truth is, I made a mistake.

I didn't believe in you. I lacked faith. And so, without further preamble or procrastination, here it is:

I'm sorry.

When Whole Foods finally opened late this spring on Biscayne Boulevard in North Miami, I was blinded by its attractive physique. In those shiny glass doors, I saw reflected back a slimmer me, one who subsists on organic produce grown

under the light of a harvest moon during monsoon season.

I envisioned a healthier version of me, fed into renal wellness by organic, naturally raised, free-range dairy and protein — also known as tofu that looks like cheese, tofu that looks like meat, and tofu that looks like tofu. I was willful, spending a teacher's paycheck on bags of gluten-free, sugar-free, flavor-free crackers and cookies. You know, the ones that have a texture like the insides of a child's desk.

Instead, my savings dwindled. I dealt with two more kidney infections. And somehow, I managed to gain weight.

After Whole Foods debuted, I became obsessed with erasing the dark circles



Photo by Penny Fletcher, The Observer News

under my eyes with specialty serums, tightening this ever-loosening skin into which I'm sewn with celebrity-endorsed solutions. I truly desired to replace missing electrolytes, sucked out by the hot and humid environment, with coconut water; cook with coconut oil; snack on fresh coconut. More than I ever had before, I was determined to recycle, reclaim, and reuse.

Instead, I was used. As a receptacle for seductive advertising, and face creams that smell like rotting gardens. As a gullible taste-tester of everything coconut, which I admit I don't really like. And I no longer had a stockpile of those handy plastic bags to scoop up the inevitable doggie accidents and cat hairballs, which this summer became

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our usual décor.

Don't blame the animals. Whole Foods, it seems, was the reason we couldn't have nice things.

Publix, I know you thought I was a hypocrite. After all, you've seen me buy enough ice cream, coffee, and wine to host the mother of all hurricane parties — except you knew it was all for me. You've watched me since the days I spent roaming your aisles with babies, their wailing mouths stuffed with free, day-old cookies obtained at the bakery counter. You've even approved — tacitly, by way of sale prices — of my enhancing these favorite food groups with more and more cases, as time went on, of Diet Coke.

Sometimes you didn't see me at all, and that's when you knew I was bingeing on Asian food at Oishi Thai (where the original Chef Bee has returned) or at Moshi Moshi (remodeled and rediscovered, it seems, by the entire Upper East-side). I felt your disapproval, but your raw ingredients just didn't tempt me enough to cook every night. Not even when you installed a booth hawking recipes.

But the real problem was that I started to change, to grow both emotionally

and, to my dismay, physically. I started to have different needs, which required a different kind of relationship. One that would nourish me in ways I hadn't suspected I needed. One that would sustain me through midlife, and beyond, when I could no longer rely on a liquid diet to get through.

I'd told you what I needed before (you can't deny that I'm a communicator), but it didn't seem like you were listening. I'd pledged to a new lifestyle, and you hadn't. Or so I thought. I left for greener, more sustainable pastures, ones that didn't legitimize fertilizer and practice chemical warfare on bees.

Shortly thereafter, I started noticing some changes in you. Rather than ignore the new neighbor up the road on Biscayne, you responded by making some positive overtures. Or your five years were up — the requisite time that a Publix waits before a remodel. (Remember when the olive bar was installed? Yep, just about five years ago.)

Whatever the reason, your pharmacy was rebuilt. Then the natural foods aisle

disappeared, with items being reorganized and placed on shelves in the general population for greater exposure. The produce and deli departments were given more accessible layouts, with added salad and soup bars. Overall you presented a kinder, gentler you, with more organic and natural products available in nearly every department.

That was right about the time my bank account came down, like the bees,

So, my darling supermarket, I'm no longer in denial. I come clean about adoring white sugar, caffeine, and alcohol.

with CCD: Colony Collapse Disorder.

So, my darling supermarket, I'm no longer in denial. I still appreciate the benefits that come with living on natural foods, but I come clean about adoring white sugar, caffeine, and alcohol as well. I can no longer suppress my horror about a ten-dollar box of strawberry mochi, and plead guilty about my inordinate

fondness for coupons and BOGO deals.

In fact, it's obvious my family and I can't live without them, and you.

Sure, things aren't completely rosy. Shopping still isn't exactly the pleasure you purport it to be. The other night I spent 30 minutes at the deli counter while an employee chatted up her friend, then finally got around to serving me the meat she'd sliced like the face of a man she despised.

But it's better with you as my partner, where buying two boxes of granola bars for the price of one will always give me a delicious little thrill. I can even clip coupons digitally on your website and use them by entering my phone number at checkout before swiping my bank card. And I have enough plastic bags in storage again to keep up with a whole kennel of barely housebroken dogs.

Add in a supercharging station for our electric car and a pleasant area for eating on-site à la your former rival, and I'll pledge to never leave you again.

Unless, of course, I have to wait another five years for such improvements. If that's the case, then I can't make any promises.

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Ambling Down NE 151st Street

Cheap (and free) treats abound at FIU's Biscayne Bay campus

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Drivers whooshing along Biscayne Boulevard generally don't turn east on NE 151st Street unless they must.

That's a pity because that mile-plus drive to the end of the road yields a garden of delights you might not know about. If you make the trek by bicycle or on foot, so much the better.

For me it's a beloved jogging and walking route. Where the road stops, confused drivers often roll down their windows and ask for directions to Oleta State Park or the beach. But the painted

Florida International University Panther paw marks — blue going in, gold going out, tell you through the school colors that you're in or near FIU Panther territory.

Now, the state park and beach are great places to catch your breath, but on Saturday and Sunday mornings, I always find FIU's Biscayne Bay campus well worth a stop.

You don't need to bring money — some of the best parts are free — but let's start with the money part.

For \$50 you can get an FIU library pass for a year at the Glenn Hubert Library 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekdays, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturdays, and noon to 11:00 p.m. Sundays (great hours



BT photo by Mark Sell

An explanatory sign along FIU's Biscayne Bay Nature Trail.

for student procrastinators). Then select from the feast and check out a book or two for a month.

For \$7 via credit card or money order (they don't take cash), you can get a day pass to the school's terrific fitness center at 160 Wolfe University Center (WUC), with a dazzling collection of weights and contraptions of all kinds. Then you can refresh yourself with laps in the Olympic-size pool

and separate diving well.

The pool is open from noon to 7:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday. The fitness center is open 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday; 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday; and 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Sunday. Get into



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the fitness center during pool hours, and you can use both for the seven bucks. Annual memberships run from \$215 to \$355. Bring your own towel.

At 10:00 a.m. on the last Saturday of the month (October 26), or at 7:00 p.m. the third Friday of the month (October 18), you can take a kayak trip with expert guides through Oleta State Park's mangroves. The trips leave from the fitness center and cost \$10, payable via credit card at the fitness center, and fill on a first-come, first-served basis. Show up at least 20 minutes early if you want a spot.

But do bring some cash, especially on Saturdays. You'll want it for the vendors serving refreshments in the seaworthy food-truck boats on the weekend floating party on Biscayne Bay.

You can learn more by calling the center at 305-919-5678.

At room 155 in the same building at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 10, the Osher Lifelong Learning Center hosts an open house for intellectually curious seniors who would like to dig into course offerings, which start October 21 and continue during the day on weekdays. You can learn everything from Mozart to

the workings of the universe or understanding Apple gadgets, all for modest fees ranging from about \$15 to \$125.

Now for the free stuff.

The campus provided our daughters with advanced placement courses, which helped give them confidence and discover new passions. The vast parking lots were perfect places to teach them to drive and help them practice for their drivers' tests.

There are the wide-open spaces at the end of the road where people operate remote-controlled helicopters, planes, and miniature trucks. When the wind is right, we like it for flying kites.

But for me, the *pièce de résistance* is the FIU bayfront nature trail. It's actually a paved bike trail that hugs the shoreline of the bay for about a mile, from a spot near the FIU parking lot to the terminus of the road, with signs and legends offering information on manatees, sea otters, various seaweeds, the great blue and little blue heron, banana spiders, and more. You can enter from the parking lot, but I like working backward, just padding along at the end of the road past the Kovens Center.

Unplug those iTunes from your ears early in the morning, and take in the sounds of seagulls, herons, roseate spoonbills, snowy egrets, and the breezes of the buttonwood trees along the red mangroves. Slow down from that jog or speed bike, and enjoy the stillness. There are plenty of benches where you can stop and take it all in, either alone or with a friend. There's art along the way, too, such as the 8-by-14-foot sculpture *Focus* by Ross Power, scheduled for submergence in 20 feet of ocean later this year.

For the full nature-trail experience, the FIU trail pairs well with the City of North Miami's Arch Creek East Environmental Preserve and trail, the old Interma Boulevard, which now takes people and pets through red mangrove forest, adjoining Oleta State Park property.

I've always enjoyed campuses and libraries as havens for curiosity, exploration, and the free play of ideas. Each campus has its own personality: the University of Florida as a learning center of a great state; New College of Sarasota, with an offbeat edginess and whimsy; and FIU's campuses, which exude immigrant drive and optimism.

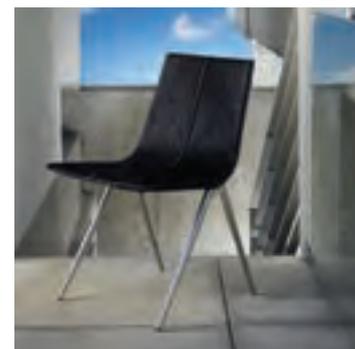
While the bayfront campus is very much of this place, it is good to see the license plates from California, Minnesota, and Indiana in the student lot next to the bayfront dorm, a sign that word gets around.

Above all, though, the FIU nature trail, as a splendid amble along Biscayne Bay, reminds you that you're not only amid the nature and unique ecology of the bay but are also at a university, where the arts and scientific inquiry can flourish.

The trail goes past both the kayaks and FIU's Marine Sciences Program, where scientists and students are taking the measure of Biscayne Bay, the ocean, and points beyond. As many of us in South Florida know well, the sea has a will of its own, with long-term implications for Miami, not to mention the FIU bayfront campus and the main Modesto Maidique campus on low land 24.5 miles southwest.

But for now, enjoy this sweet spot, especially as the temperature starts to drop. An amble along FIU's Biscayne Bay campus is a great place to discover the joys of learning, of nature, and of savoring the moment.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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A Fire-eater Catches Some Heat

Don't take my coconuts again, please?

By Ken Jett
BT Contributor

Let's pretend you own a large lot, property so big that you've only fenced a portion of it, or maybe setback requires fencing to be ten feet from property lines. Is the property outside the fence yours? Do you by default lose it to local drifters?

Police, city workers, drug users and dealers, dog walkers, prostitutes, Santería practitioners, litterbugs, florist wannabes, drug-addled homeless, and most recently a coconut thief all seem to perceive this private property as public space.

While those on drugs may not know where they are, others know it's not their

property. Even if they believe it's public space, their activities are nevertheless immoral, illegal, and egregious.

On a day like any other, something large was atop one of my trees. Having just read Jen Karetnick's column on area monkeys ("Assault on the Shores"), I was giddy with excitement but immediately knew mine was no monkey. Palm fronds and coconuts were being chopped to the ground. It was a coconut bandit, rare in these parts, but not shocking. I decided to capture him on video.

Learning of my call to Miami Police Department's non-emergency number (305-579-6111), he threw his machete to the ground, descended the tree, and waited for the police to arrive. I figured that if he



Photo courtesy of Donovan Lamont

Prince Dragon (Donavan Lamont) performing one of his fire tricks.

was stealing from our trees, he was doing the same around the neighborhood, and I thought it time to stop the cycle.

I wanted to understand why he chose to offend when, had he approached me for permission, I might have said yes. I wanted a glimpse into his moral reasoning.

He offered pleas of contrition in search of a moral pass — hopes that

"sorry" would result in absolution. When those failed, he donned the veil of ignorance, saying he was unaware it was our yard. This made me laugh. While not as annoying as the *no hablo inglés* defense used by the neighbors building a radiator shop (and who miraculously spoke fluent *ingles* when cops arrived), using this self-reported stupidity was laughable.

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by Derek

Miamians, I blame us! Either we're too nice to hold others morally responsible or we lack moral intelligence. Or worse, we're morally apathetic. Offenders are acculturating us to relax our collective moral responsibility. We're being played!

Let's deliberate: "Miamians aren't too nice." I've lived elsewhere and know that's not the case. While apathy abounds, it isn't the answer either because many care about our magic city. Maybe we believe that when offenders are members of another cultural group, "those people" don't morally value things the way "we" do.

Don't be duped! Steven Pinker's *The Moral Instinct* found similar values exist around the globe. Across cultures, morals cluster around five themes: harm, fairness, community, authority, and purity. With others in mind, people think it's bad to harm people, likewise good to help them.

They believe people who do good things deserve reward; cheaters deserve punishment. They value group membership and loyalty. They defer to legitimate authority. They uphold purity and abhor hedonism.

The responding officers did better than expected after my mini lesson in private-property boundaries. Property

lines and fences aren't the same things. Rather than attend to faulty reasoning proffered by an offender, the question isn't whether he knew it was our yard, but whether he knew it isn't his.

They found it as funny as I did that he'd locked up his tricycle so that it wouldn't be stolen while he stole coconuts, and they offered to charge "Lamont."

Explaining that my intention was for an authority to explain his offenses, I assured them a warning was enough. Still unsure of his situation, Lamont said he would have asked permission had he known where to approach. His veil of ignorance was still firmly in place. The human animal is intriguing and frustrating.

Each excuse was confronted with logic. Lamont knew it wasn't his yard and he knew what he was doing. He knew the moral distinctions between right and wrong. He hoped he wouldn't be caught. His moral manipulation had failed miserably.

His reactions, when attempts at exploitation were rendered impotent, made him more intriguing. With the officers as witnesses, I explained that moral and social expectations that exist and extend to all, underscoring if he were found

thieving from me again, he would be taking a ride to the pokey.

The officers didn't run Lamont's name. If they had, they would've found that his name is Donovan Lamont and that he has had his share of run-ins with the law — mostly misdemeanors, mainly related to possession of marijuana.

Had I known his history, I would've thought a third time before allowing him inside my fence to retrieve a mother lode of coconuts from trees in our yard. But I did.

Donovan Lamont, a.k.a. Prince Dragon, mentored me in "coconutology" and shared fantastical stories of his experiences. This 51-year-old Jamaican came to Miami in the 1980s while working for the cruise lines. Starting as a bellboy and branching into performance, he worked for Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Lines.

He moved to New York, where he married, gained citizenship, and returned to Miami, minus the wife. He is a fire-eater, fire dancer, and limbo artist who's been with his agency for 20 years.

Past work he proudly shared includes: performing in Sade's 1992 *Kiss of Life* video; limboing in a 1994 *Saturday Night Live* skit, an ad with Manute Bol

for "Majestic Caribbean Cruise Line" vacations; appearing on *Up All Night with Gilbert Gottfried*; performing in an Orange Bowl Parade and two Super Bowls; and recently dancing for Daddy Yankee's performance of "Limbo" at the 2013 Billboard Latin Music Awards.

His agent verified many facts and described Prince Dragon as quite the character. He works all over South Florida — the Disney parks system, SeaWorld, NGALA, various trade shows, and private events.

If there's a next time that he wanders into my neighborhood, he knows the social and moral contract to which he'll be held.

I encourage all of you to hold others morally and socially accountable. Be safe and call the police when you think something is wrong. Miamians, stop being so nice, so ignorant, or so apathetic. Build a community where it's not acceptable for others to harm neighbors in any way, the least of which may be the theft of coconuts.

To book Prince Dragon, contact IBA Music (407-897-3522), or if you have coconuts, he may show up on his own.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Tree Falls in Brickell

Protests over tree removal? What tree removal?

By **Adam Schachner**
BT Contributor

Brickell Avenue has been noisy lately, between the chainsaws and protests.

A transformation of the landscape got under way last month as a number of trees lining the avenue's center medians from SW 15th Road to SW 25th Road were being cut down. The increased exposure brought more to light than just the street views. We learned about the shortcomings in communication between the city and some of its residents.

The beautification project has turned ugly, in fact. Tree-removal notifications that residents said were poorly placed caught many of them off guard and left them unprepared to make a timely response. (It's worth noting that many other residents knew about the

landscaping project and supported it.) Their irate reactions included protests and petitions, illustrating an ongoing strain in the relationships between public services and private citizens.

In the fall of 2012, Commissioner Marc Sarnoff and Mark Spanioli, the city's capital improvements director, introduced plans to redo Brickell Avenue's tree cover along the medians. Their concern was that many of the trees posed liability risks owing to conditions ranging from weak trunks, disease, damage and storm trauma, old age, and poor health caused by overcrowding, all requiring prompt removal. This past July, final plans were submitted to the city.

In early August, signs were posted on the medians, detailing the plan to remove the trees and begin street and sidewalk renovations. A few weeks later, in accordance with municipal regulations, the



BT photo by Adam Schachner

Poor communication between city and citizens sparked protests along Brickell.

city posted notices on each tree slated for removal. These were the size of standard letterhead, affixed to tree trunks in plastic slips and left for public perusal.

Those notifications outraged some people who'd been unaware of the city plan. They argued that the postings were inaccessible; in order to read them, one had to dodge traffic and brave a median that pedestrians are prohibited from using.

The plan did come with the blessing and support of the Brickell Homeowners

Association (BHA). The association distributed a letter in response to the protests, noting that the project had been in the works for two years. The association's spring/summer newsletter noted that board members "were sad but not surprised to learn that many of the trees in the Brickell median will have to be replaced due to disease and damage," and that the project would "most likely start in August, Commissioner Sarnoff reported to the BHA Board."

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The project is part of BHA's legislative agenda, a process that vice president Gail Feldman referred to as a "cogent plan designed to beautify and make safe" the Brickell throughway. The renewal project is "not destructive, but responsible," she told *BT*. The buildup to the tree culling was meticulous, involving examinations from expert arborists.

Why, then, were the residents drafting petitions and picketing?

Miriam Merino was a principal organizer of the protests, which began in mid-September and included demonstrations during rush hour and on weekends. Signs on the doomed trees proclaimed *Save Us!* and *They Want to Kill 75 Trees!!!* The protests worked, she said, even as trees were being cut down; she collected hundreds of signatures from passers-by and supportive observers.

"The BHA organizes as a watchdog," Merino says, "but they gave the green light without notifying everybody. There are 50,000 people living in Brickell." (The BHA full membership includes condominiums of some 25,000 residents, as well as associate business memberships.)

In her estimation, a sizable portion of Brickell's residents had no clue the trees were slated to fall. Her petition urged the city to halt the tree cutting until the city commission discussed its plan "properly" with residents; claimed residents were not adequately notified; and added, "Many trees are perfectly healthy. Many only need proper pruning, feeding, or treatment." In a recent *Herald* story, Merino did acknowledge that "many trees on the median need to be replaced because they're sick or damaged." She told the paper that "most residents simply want the median back the way it was."

The city's postings, she maintains, included "verbiage that was misleading" on signs that were "unnoticeable and unreadable" by anyone not standing on the median or facing it from Brickell's east side. "What about the west residents?" she asks.

She also contacted city officials and concedes that she received an invitation to meet with the project's leaders, including Spanioli, but turned it down because she was unwilling to be the sole voice for Brickell's residents and would just be "told the same thing I've seen on paper."

(On September 10, Spanioli posted an online response to her petition, and wrote that the changes not only included a new irrigation system and sidewalk expansion, but the replacement of those 75 weakened trees with some 240 others whose minimum height would be 20 feet, or two stories, and more than 1000 shrubs and ground coverings.)

By the protest's second day, Commissioner Sarnoff's senior staffer, Will Plasencia, appeared on the scene to offer the city's perspective. He distributed statements, project records, and bottles of water, and was intent on answering residents' questions.

Of the appeals and protests received before work on the tree-cutting began, "the department contacted each group," he said. "I can tell you, to a T, all of them, once they saw the scope, walked away okay with it. Your commissioner made it a point to oversee that Brickell gets what it deserves."

Plasencia noted that "we could be doing this better," in response to residents' complaints, particularly about the inconvenient signage. "This is my baby, too," he said.

The conflict died down after two weeks of protests. Commissioner Sarnoff

and Spanioli met with frustrated residents at a September 17 meeting at the Brickell Place condo tower (it should have taken place before the first tree fell). Prior to the meeting, calls to action were posted on trees, doors, and social media pages, encouraging residents to attend. A Facebook group, "Brickell Unites to Save the Trees," was launched to promote attendance.

After voicing their concerns, the irate residents got what they asked for: a halt to the project. The 40 trees that had been cut will be replaced with fully grown trees.

According to Spanioli, the project is on hold and under review.

The renewal project's opponents made a lot of noise and have been celebrating their victory. But they prevented the installation of 165 new trees and a multitude of shrubs. As victories go, this one seems bittersweet.

The tree-removal issue illustrates the need for clear dialogue between city and community. In these relationships, all parties have a right to be heard, and a responsibility to be attentive.

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Three Cultures, Many Sounds

The Spanish Cultural Center showcases Latin music's global roots

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

When Columbus first landed in what would become known as the Dominican Republic, he was looking for a shortcut to the East Indies, access to the lucrative spice trade. And it wouldn't be bad if he found some gold and silver along the way.

In the meanwhile, his compatriots back in Europe were trying to literally cook up such riches in alchemy labs, mixing up various raw materials with mystical beliefs and rituals.

It turns out that Columbus might have been one of the most successful alchemists of all. When he "discovered" the New World, he inadvertently began a process of combing the various instruments, tonalities, vocal varieties, and rhythms of three world cultures — that of the Iberian peninsula and Europe, of the indigenous populations of the Americas, and of Africa.

The music that evolved is one of history's cultural highlights. At times complex, romantic, danceable, religious, and spiritual, Latin American music is the ultimate hybrid of genres and influences. It also remains, at the same time, regional and unique to particular countries and eras.

That's what you discover when visiting the Spanish Cultural Center Miami (Centro Cultural Español, or CCE) and

its traveling exhibit "A Tres Bandas: Syncretism and Hybridization in the Music of Latin America, 16th-20th Centuries."

Don't let the title scare you. The "A Tres Bandas" part might loosely be translated as "Three Bands" (musically) or "Triologue" (a three-part conversation).

To start, this is simply a gorgeous show. The subtle lighting that bathes the space makes it feel like a stage set, which is intentional. When you enter, guitars



Guitars and other string instruments are set above planks representing the galleons that brought them.



At listening stations, it becomes clear that the term "Latin music" is too broad.

and other string instruments, large and tiny, hang from the ceiling, set above wooden planks meant to represent the galleons that first brought them over. Further in, pipes and flutes form more sculptures.

One hanging bamboo installation has a video projected on it, of an Indian choir. Another is composed of masks. One wall is painted as a facsimile of a decorative church façade — the mixture of color,

forms, and iconography points to the integration that has aesthetically gone on for centuries. These are lovely backdrops that propel you through the exhibit.

Another interesting guide is the use of painted grid charts that accompany the various installations and sound stations. Think of charts that depict population or demographic changes. In this case, the blue lines represent the amount of Hispanic influence on the music or culture; yellow the native indigenous; the pink/red the African. In certain regions or in certain genres — maybe where the vocal element is strong — the blue line might rise the highest. In the Andes regions, the yellow might.

But while all three forms undeniably went into making a musical expression unique to the Western Hemisphere, the generalized term "Latin music" is too broad, as we find out with the numerous samples on headphones and in video of almost every type of music from the



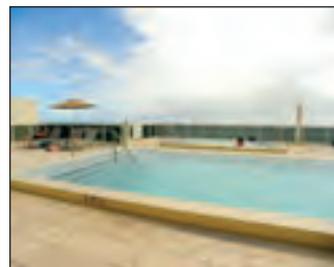
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A video of a Latin choir is projected on a bamboo curtain.

Caribbean, South and Central America, and Mexico, from the popular and familiar to the more regional and obscure.

Music critic and jazz musician Fernando González, who is organizing some of the listening sessions taking place as part of the exhibit, explains during a tour of the space that styles differ widely, even within the same country. He points out that the tango of the cosmopolitan port city of Buenos Aires sounds nothing like the music that developed out of the hinterland of the pampas.

The northern Mexican mariachi music, with its polka roots and almost big-band sound, is a world away from the percussion-based, Afro-rhythmic Caribbean and Brazilian flavor — or is it?

Some music was created specifically for ritual and religious expression; some for street-life fun; some became blended and interchangeable. And the blending of styles and cultures has not stopped. Who created salsa, and where (hint: maybe New York)? Is North American rap

now integral to contemporary Latin and Caribbean music?

You can start your own age of discovery of the incredible fusion of music made in the New World when entering “A Tres Bandas.”

There are several threads to this exhibit. The first is more historical, concentrating on the how, where, and extent of the intermixing.

No one can get around the traumatic beginnings. Spanish conquest involved subjugation and death of the native populations, and the introduction of Africans was solely through slavery. But different areas experienced different outcomes. The Caribbean and coastal areas of South America were highly influenced by African traditions.

The Catholicism imported from the Spaniards (and in the case of Brazil, the Portuguese, and in Haiti, the French) became melded in an intriguing way with the religions of West Africa. Many of the saints could “double” with a spirit



Like music, religions blended, altering Catholic symbols.

or god from the Yorùbá religion of Nigeria, for instance. And music honoring all of their forms arose — which in some cases resulted in the origins of the rumba and the samba.

Western instruments and native dance moves were added into the mix, resulting in the Colombian cumbia. Another Colombian musical variation, the vallenato, has three main “ingredients” in its makeup: a small African drum, the caja; the guacharaca stick instruments of the Indian natives to the coast; and the accordion — can’t get more hybrid than that. Of course, there are the Cuban favorites as well, the bolero and son, and merengue out of Dominican Republic.

Elsewhere in the New World, the mixing was different. While African slaves were imported everywhere across the southern cone, the huge Indian populations in Mexico, Central America, and Peru influenced the music more heavily, and often the Spanish guitar played a more significant role.

And on and on. The last part of the exhibit is dedicated to all this music and more, accompanied by videos. Move from one station to the next, don the headphones, and watch clips from the past and the present. There’s a great one from the master originator from Cuba, Benny Moré. In fact, in his music alone — mostly from the 1950s — you can hear a little bit of everything, rolled into what became some of the most popular “Latin” music ever. Son, mambo, bolero — it’s all there.

This last hallway of music dramatically reveals that while much of this exhibit is about history, the Latin sound has never, from its founding day, been static. It is diversifying still, this time with global influences. And in return, global has gone Latin.

“A Tres Bandas” runs through Oct. 27 at the CCEMiami, 1490 Biscayne Blvd., Miami; free; go to www.ccemiami.org for accompanying events.

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KABE CONTEMPORARY

123 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-573-8142
www.kabecontemporary.com
Through October 31:
"Recent Works" by Karmelo Bermejo

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
October 10 through November 16:



Pablo Jansana, B1B2, pigment and resin on stretched canvas, 2012, at DOT Fiftynone Gallery.

"The Pull of Tide" by Mira Lehr
Reception October 10, 6 to 8 p.m.

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

LOCUST PROJECTS

3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
Through October 12:
"Grid's World" with Alexandra Hopf, Marcos Valella, Siebren Versteeg, Gabriel Vormstein, and Odalis Valdivieso

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART AND DESIGN

Freedom Tower
600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700
www.mdcmoad.org
Through November 2:
"Traveling Forms" by Leandro Vazquez
Through November 17:
"A Painter and Her Audience" by Antonia Eiriz
"Elaborate Webs/Striking Exploits" by Anne Austin Pearce and Sara Stites

MICHAEL JON GALLERY

122 NE 11th St., Miami
305-521-8520
www.michaeljongallery.com

Through October 26:
"Awkward Chairs vs Future King's Feet" by Carlos Reyes

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
Call gallery for exhibition information

N'NAMDI CONTEMPORARY GALLERY

177 NW 23rd St., Miami
786-332-4736
www.nnamdicontemporary.com
October 12 through November 7:
"The Other City" by Juan Logan

NOW CONTEMPORARY ART

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

O. ASCANIO GALLERY

2600 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-571-9036
www.oascaniogallery.com
Through October 30: "Contemporary Artists" with various artists

ONCE ARTS GALLERY

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

PAN AMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400, www.panamericanart.com
Through November 22: "Vanitas" by José Toirac and Meira Marrero

P.S.H. PROJECTS

72 NW 25 St., Miami
305-576-1645, www.pshprojects.com
October 10 through November 15:
"Breaking News" by David Palacios
"MADA New Media Festival: Raul Marroquin and Friends" with various artists
Reception October 10, 7 to 10 p.m.

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

SPINELLO PROJECTS

2930 NW 7th Ave., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinelloprojects.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

150 NE 42nd St., Miami
http://swampspace.blogspot.com/
swampstyle@gmail.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI GALLERY

2750 NW 3rd Ave., Ste 4, Miami
305-284-3161
www.as.miami.edu/art
October 8 through 25:
"Clang Boom Steam" with various artists, curated by Milly Cardoso

UNIX FINE ART GALLERY

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-496-0621
www.unixfineart.com
Ongoing:
Alexis Torres
October 10 through November 19:
"American Le-Trina" by Williams Carmona

WALTMAN ORTEGA FINE ART

2233 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-5335
www.waltmanortega.com
Through October 15: "For Real: America Through the Eyes of European Artists" with Alain Bertrand, Ronald Dupont, and Fernando Kindelan
October 10 through November 6: "Light!" with Rune Guneriusen, NOART, and Alain Le Boucher
Reception October 10, 5 to 8 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



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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2013 AT 7:30PM
Soprano SANDRA LOPEZ and pianist PAUL POSNAK feature Posnak's new arrangements of the canciones and zarzuelas of Ernesto Lecuona – *Siboney, Malaguena, Siempre en mi Corazon* – from their new CD. Hear them at sandralopezsoprano.com and paulposnak.com. *Sponsored by Dade County Cultural Affairs and The Children's Trust*



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2013 AT 7:30PM
Valencia's SPANISH BRASS will enthrall with *Retaule de Nadal*, a not-your-usual-holiday concert of regional Christmas songs and international holiday classics, in their inimitable great-performances-can-be-fun style. Hear them at SpanishBrass.com. *Sponsored by The Symphonettes.*



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2014 AT 3PM
England's VIDA GUITAR QUARTET are known for their "vitality" and "exquisite tonal and dynamic control" as they perform guitar classics and works from Gershwin to de Falla to Scottish and Yiddish dances, all with finesse, humor and great style. Hear them at vidagq.com.



SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 2014 AT 3PM
Duo Duo's from Germany and South Korea. DUO YOO and KIM were winners at the 2013 Dranoff Int'l 2 Piano Competition. HANS-PETER and VOLKER STENZL won the 2nd Dranoff Competition and have illustrious international careers. Together they will feature classics, jazz, and musical surprises, including our commissioned *Martha and Mary Meditation*. Hear them at YooandKim.com and stenzl-pianoduo.net.



SATURDAY, MARCH 29 AT 7:30PM & SUNDAY, MARCH 30 AT 3PM
Flautist/Composer NESTOR TORRES, Composer/Conductor TANIA LEÓN, Composer/Pianist MIGUEL DEL AGUILA, Pianist/Arranger PAUL POSNAK -- in a CARIBBEAN CELEBRATION that includes the premiere of our 2nd Martha and Mary Meditation, by Nestor Torres. Choose your date – there are TWO performances!! Hear them at NestorTorres.com, tanialeon.com, Miguel del Aguila.com. *Sponsored by peermusic.*

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All programs are subject to change without notice.

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Saint Martha Concerts



ZADOK GALLERY
2534 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-438-3737
www.zadokgallery.com
Through November 2:
"Collapse of Promise" by Ghost
of a Dream
Through January 4:
"Songs of Freedom" by Maria
Magdalena Campos-Pons

MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

ARTCENTER/SOUTH FLORIDA
800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
October 5 through November 3:
"On Location: Carol Jazzar
Contemporary Art" with Robert
Huff, Kuhl & Leyton, Jorge
Pantoja, David Rohn, and
Roberto Visani
Reception October 9, 6 to 10 p.m.
October 5 through November 17:
"Correspondences" by Marina Font and Amalia Caputo
Reception October 16, 6 to 10 p.m.

BASS MUSEUM OF ART
2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through October 13: Mat Collishaw
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 Alfonso

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM
10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890, thefrost.fiu.edu
Through October 13:
"Faculty Show" with Pip Brant, and Michael Namkung
Through December 31:
"Deep Blue" by Javier Velasco
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
October 16 through December 8:
"Eternal Cuba: The Darlene M. and Jorge M. Perez



Peggy Levison Nolan, *Untitled (crying)*, C-print, 2013, at Dina Mitrani Gallery.

Collection at FIU" with various artists
October 16 through January 5:
"From Africa to the Americas" with various artists
October 16 through February 2:
"Tracing Atlantes" by Humberto Castro

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 November 3: "Love of Technology" with Luis
Fernando Benedit, 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

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION
591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051, www.margulieswarehouse.com
October 23 through April 26:
"The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse" with
various artists

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

WORLD CLASS BOXING
Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection
170 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-438-9908
www.worldclassboxing.org
Call gallery for exhibition information

Compiled by Melissa Wallen
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to
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A Multi-Culti Musical Mission

The **Idan Raichel Project** is hard to put a label on — he’s a one-man explosion from Israel who surrounds himself with some of the best world music artists anywhere — from African musical masters to Middle Eastern instrumentalists and Caribbean percussionists. His collaboration with Mali’s Vieux Farka Touré, *The Tel Aviv Session* was considered one of the best recordings of 2012 by many critics. He brings his multicultural project to the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami) on **Thursday, October 17**, at 8:30 p.m.; tickets range from \$35-\$75 at www.arshtcenter.org.

Homestead, Where Books Abound

The big book fair doesn’t start until November, but in the meantime, a quirky little one will take place in Homestead on **Saturday, October 5**, from 4:00 p.m. till 8:00 p.m. Called **Homestead Centennial Book Fair**, it’s being organized around the publication of Miami Shores historian Seth Bramson’s *Homestead, Florida: From Railroad Boom to Sonic Boom*, about the 100-year history of the area. The fair will include a number of other authors who have penned books on such topics as the snake invasion and the lives of “swamp people.” There will be a writers’ workshop, live music, and a food truck, all at Losner Park on Krome Avenue. It’s free! For details go to www.cityofhomestead.com.

Funny in the Grove

So CocoWalk might have provoked snickers when it first opened, in November 1990, for its kitschy stores and over-the-top design, but in fact Coconut Grove has a proud history of raising eyebrows and being nutty. In the late 1960s, it was Miami’s Haight-Ashbury, overflowing with colorful characters and cannabis clouds. Now you can learn a lot more with the inaugural **Coconut Grove Comedy History Walk** from HistoryMiami (101 W. Flagler St., Miami) on **Sunday, October 6**, from 9:00 to

11:00 a.m. Stroll along with professor-comedian Freddy Strebbins through these unique, leafy Miami streets; \$20 members, \$30 non-members; www.historymiami.org.

Teeny Tuxedos and Diminutive Dresses

Why should adults be the only ones to enjoy the ritual of dressing up and going to a glam ball? In fact, we might be too jaded anyhow. So bring on the **Imagination Ball** in the elegant Ziff Ballet Opera House at the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami), from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. on **Sunday, October 6**. Interactive painter and performance artist David Garibaldi and his CMYKs will perform for those under-age ballroom dancers, and will be joined by a DJ later in the afternoon. And of course there will be arts activities, a kids’ rock band, and treats, courtesy of Barton G. It’s all part of the Arsht Families series; www.arshtcenter.org.

Real Time Nuevo Latin Tunes

It may be a cliché, but it happens to be true: Miami is a Latin American capital. And an evening like **OLA Music Fest** is one reason why. Part of the MDC Live Arts season, it will be a packed night of the latest sounds in Latin music, starting at 9:00 p.m. on **Friday, October 11**. From electropico and funk to cumbia and dancehall, the likes of Miami’s Mr. Pauer and Elastic Bond, Peru’s

Dengue Dengue Dengue!, and Puerto Rico’s Los Chinchillos del Caribe will lay the new down at Grand Central (697 N. Miami Ave., Miami); tickets cost \$25, \$10 for MDC students; www.mdclivearts.org.

Dazzling Light on Old Children’s Tales

You and the little ones may know “**The Ugly Duckling**” and “**The Tortoise and the Hare**,” but have you seen them produced by the Lightwire Theater, which uses “electroluminescent” puppetry? Hard to pass up these timeless fairy tales, called “magical,” for two shows at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on **Saturday, October 12**, at the Aventura Cultural and Arts Center (3385 NE 188th St., Aventura); tickets cost \$15; www.aventuracenter.org.

A Jewish ‘Foodie’ History of Florida

Who knew that a Jewish presence in the Florida food industry has been prominent for more than 200 years? The Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU (301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach) came up with the extensive and entertaining exhibit **Growers, Grocers, and Gefilte Fish: A Gastronomic Look at Florida Jews & Food**, opening on **Tuesday, October 15**. The exhibit includes a look at the “King of Citrus”; the massive, Jewish-owned groves and dairy farms; Sheldon’s Drugstore, where Isaac Bashevis Singer heard that he’d he won the Nobel Prize; and other



French Jazz Fest Jumps the Pond

In its second year, **The Miami Nice Jazz Festival** is the U.S. version of the successful festival that takes place in Nice, France. The event starts **Wednesday, October 23**, and runs through November 10 at various locations across Miami-Dade. Soulful singer Gregory Porter takes the stage on opening night, Stanley Clarke and the Harlem String Quartet will play on another, while a “Tribute to Chet Baker” features Brazilian jazz vocalist Elaine Elias. A highlight: French singer Jil Aigrot and her homage to Edith Piaf on Saturday, October 26, at the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center (174 E. Flagler St., Miami) at 8:00 p.m.; MiamiNiceJazzFestival.com.

farmers, grocers, distributors, and restaurateurs, including such contemporary star chefs as Michael Schwartz and Michelle Bernstein. Visit www.jewishmuseum.com.

Tech Forward to the Future

The title of this public forum, **South Beach to Silicon Beach**, almost sounds like a joke, but developing South Florida’s high-tech sector is no laughing matter. The event takes place from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on **Tuesday, October 15**, at the University of Miami Life Science & Technology Park (1951 NW 7th Ave., Miami), in conjunction with the MIT Enterprise Forum of South Florida. The panel, which is preceded by a networking session, features leaders from academia, government, finance, and the tech industry, and is a testament to their belief that as our area’s population and institutions grow, so will high-tech opportunities. Tickets cost \$30. Go to www.mitforumfl.org.

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



Let’s Get Creepy

Ah, a good old **Zombie Crawl**, coming back for a second year a little ahead of Halloween on **Saturday, October 19**. Miamians like nothing more than to express our party spirit in costume! The zombie invasion begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Fountain Plaza in the Shops at Midtown (between N. Miami Avenue and Midtown Boulevard, Miami). For \$33.33 you can taste the wine, beer, and appetizer offerings of the participating restaurants and other businesses. Crawl all around Midtown with a wristband that gets you lots of zombie specials — but you gotta look ghoulish. See www.southfloridazombiecrawl.com.

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Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Just Like a Bad Script

1600 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

There are many instances of people inviting potential lovers home, only to have their stuff stolen. In this caper, a German tourist invited a female of the night to his hotel room for a good old romping time. This female was kind enough to create a special cold medicine concoction for the victim. Don't know what is worse, having a romantic interlude with a sneezing beau or actually letting a stranger of the night serve you a mystery drink. The tourist passed out after taking the cold medicine, and video cameras caught a male accomplice escorting the female out with the victim's property. Welcome to Miami, our tourist friend. You made Crime Beat.



Putting Out Fires at Home

60 Block of NE 62nd Street

Even our Bravest are susceptible to low-life theft – whether an inside job or not. As at most firehouses, the heroes at this location contribute to a grocery fund, while one firefighter becomes the cook. In this firehouse, the metal can containing the firefighters' hard-earned money was empty one evening, to the tune of \$400. We hope it was another unseemly Miami scumbag who got into the area; if not, if you see that fire truck coming, you best not be carrying cash before the hose-down.

No Leads in Stealth Theft

1000 Block of NE 83rd Street

Bartenders work for tips, and once the patrons start drinking, the tips tend to come in waves. At Sushi Siam, known for its delicious food and pleasant atmosphere, the bartender was assisting someone when she took her eyes off the tip box. Now this beats the aforementioned firefighter's loot — a total of \$550 was taken. That's a lot of tips! No one saw anything, and in a restaurant of raw

fish aficionados, the chops sticks kept moving; perhaps the thief needed to pay for those expensive box meals.

Walking in Miami Can Still Be Dangerous

NE 83rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard

We haven't gotten to the point where one can walk freely without fear of provocation. This poor chap went to a Quickstop at Biscayne and 78th Street, a five-block walk from his home. On the way back, he realized he was being followed. He was then threatened with a rock and tackled; the thug took \$200 and an iPhone. Victim is unsure if he can identify him. Notice to Miami denizens: Please be aware of your surroundings, as this is not an isolated incident.

The Torture of Tracking Devices

1600 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Man was doing a presentation at the Hilton Hotel when his laptop came up missing. My goodness, even at business presentations, one could still be a victim.

The good news, we think, is that his laptop has a tracking device and showed up somewhere between Hallandale and Miramar — that helps. To make matters worse, the account name had been changed to “Kourtney.” So ... time to find Kourtney somewhere in that area of North Dade and Broward. No arrests have been made thus far, but we do know someone is using a stolen computer. Good for that tracking device.

Next Time, Go to Tires Plus!

600 Block of NE 87th Street

For goodness sake, we know it’s hard finding a good mechanic, but do you just want to be robbed? We also mean this literally. Man was fixing his girlfriend’s car — the alternator went out — when he was approached by a man who offered him a good deal on a used one. They agreed and when the thug-chanic came by with a used alternator, the two argued over the final price. Of course they did. The thug-chanic installed the alternator, which didn’t work. Owner demanded his money back, and it was at this time when two other subjects came by and began attacking the poor victim. They also took his wallet. He ran inside his home and called police as they vandalized the vehicle. Let this be a motto: If you trust someone to install an alternator whom you just met on the street, you’d best only pump gas in your car.

A Bad Name for Cat Owners

1300 Block of NE 128th Street

Usually cat owners are a passive lot, but not this dude. A neighbor’s dog had escaped into his yard, and injured his cat. The enraged cat owner banged on the dog owner’s door and demanded to be let in. The owner thought it was the police and let him in, not realizing the feline lover had a baseball bat. Seeing the enraged man with a bat, she fainted and rescue had to be called. When rescue arrived, the enraged cat owner kept interfering with the medical procedures and was asked to leave; he threatened the rescue workers and assumed a fighting stance (seriously), then threatened to

break their car windows. Police arrived quickly and arrested the nut. Hopefully, his little critter will find a better home, assuming he is still alive.

Drama at 8:00 a.m.

7900 Block of N. Bayshore Court

Most people just want their bagel and coffee when they arrive at work. At this construction site, a man who was not an employee demanded entrance. He had a pit-bull. Answer: No. No hardhat, not even a construction worker. Makes sense, right? Not to this psycho. He took out a BB gun and shot pellets around the site, puncturing windows in the trailer.

Picking and Choosing

12500 Block of NE 13th Avenue

When fights happen in North Miami, people take things to the extreme. This angry person, for whatever reason, felt slighted, so he knocked down the door of a woman’s acquaintance. He then smashed two televisions, including a 40-inch flat-screen. He then chose to steal the wireless computer router. Most would have smashed the router and taken the 40-inch flat-screen television, but we gather he’s a computer nerd with feckless social skills. He’s a little guy too, only weighing 145 pounds. So much going on here, and at press time, no immediate arrest.

The North Miami Safe House

13500 Block of NE 23rd Place

With *Grand Theft Auto 5* on store shelves, our own criminal slime wish to act the part. At a vacant apartment, mystery men have been entering via a glass door. For whatever reason, the apartment can’t be secured and the thugs have participated in “urinating” and leaving behind soft drinks. They had the nerve to leave the dishwasher on at one point. What in the world were they washing? This apartment still has not been rented, and we hope the owner either gives these guys an official lease (since they love it so much) or secures the glass door.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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A Bike Rider's Paradise

North Miami's 13 acres of "wildness" lie hidden in plain sight

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Baring skin and wriggling in a pine tree, the raven-haired model/singer was lip-syncing in Spanish to a pop song while cameramen swarmed around her.

The song was forgettable, but she was not. She was serving it from that tree — the one hanging over the canal with the nostalgia-laden rope swing. Although she swayed, she did not swing.

That scene from last year was one of the more entertaining I've seen over the past decade of visiting the road to the bay, one of my favorite hidden spots and certainly one of the best places for a casual bike ride in our area.

The spot is so well hidden (in plain sight) that the City of North Miami didn't know it existed until 2007. Can you imagine waking up one day and finding 13 empty acres in your city? It happened for North Miami when officials conducted a full assessment of parks and discovered this patch of unclaimed land.

Those 13 acres were protected unanimously by the city council and became the Arch Creek East Environmental

Preserve. North Miami Councilman Scott Galvin calls the 5-0 vote "one of my proudest moments."

For years the preserve has drawn joggers, dog walkers, and nature seekers owing to miles of trails that begin here and wind through the Biscayne Bay Campus of Florida International University. That school's open space, dubbed in this column as the "free Oleta" park, rates a solid 4 out of 5.

Arch Creek East in isolation holds minor visitor appeal (unless you need to shoot a music video for MTV *en español*), but its connections to FIU, Biscayne Bay, and the hundreds of acres of mangrove forest nearby make it a grand entryway. The preserve's triangular entrance is marked with a wooden sign near the eastern dead end of NE 135th Street, and the street splits into two bike lanes that rejoin into a wide but secluded road.

The road was deeded to the preserve based on support from area residents and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, according to Galvin. This year the road has been mired in controversy, as FIU revealed its plan to reopen the former access road as a second main artery into the campus. Local resistance,



BT photos by Jim W. Harper

North Miami conducted an assessment of parks and discovered this patch of unclaimed land.



The split bike lanes later merge into a wide but secluded road.

especially from residents on the quiet street, has shifted that search away from the preserve.

The large undeveloped area around the preserve, known as the Oleta Annex, has also come under fire recently, but for now it has dodged the bullet of being sold as "surplus land" by Florida's Department of Environmental Protection. Again, local resistance resulted in this parcel being pulled from the state list of vulnerable properties.

The concept of "surplus" mangroves seems absurd in South Florida, considering that this essential habitat is extremely depleted. Mangrove forests and coastal estuaries have been categorized by scientists as the most valuable ecosystems on earth.

Arch Creek East has flourishing 40-foot mangroves within its 13 acres, although they're difficult to appreciate up close because of their density. Mostly red mangroves, casting thick shade, they have curved aerial roots that interlace with neighboring trees and form tangled buttresses above the muddy substrate.

The landscaping at the entrance of the preserve features a patch of native coontie plants, about a foot high each. A white sign designates them as protected habitat for the Blue Atala butterfly, which feeds on coontie, the plant that was once used across the region for making starch. The small black butterflies have bright orange bodies and iridescent blue spots, and they can be found here if you look closely.

While small, this patch of plants provides a steppingstone that the butterflies can use in connection with much larger patches in nearby Arch Creek Park and the Enchanted Forest Park, located about a mile directly west of the preserve. The stretch in between these green spaces is Arch Creek East, and it has an active neighborhood association.

The preserve's other visible plants along the access road are not so friendly; in fact, they are almost completely invasive species. The trees may appear green and shady, but they lack functionality for native species like the Blue Atala butterfly, and they displace the native plants that would keep the area in better ecological balance.

ARCH CREEK EAST ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVE



Park Rating



Eastern terminus of NE 135th Street
North Miami, FL 33181
Hours: 7 am — 10 pm
Picnic tables: No
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: No
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No



An old rope swing hangs over a shallow canal.



The Urban Paradise Guild's mangrove plantings.



Atalas have orange bodies and iridescent blue spots.

Local tree-planters have started attacking this problem, organized through the Urban Paradise Guild, and their baby mangroves can be seen behind orange protective fencing near the bridge closest to the preserve.

The preserve's two concrete walking bridges, about 5 feet wide and 50 feet across, traverse brackish water canals that connect the inner mangrove forest to saltier Biscayne Bay to the southeast. After strong rains, the water runs clear

toward the bay, and you can spot fish, such as small barracuda and the checkered puffer fish, that thrive very close to the shoreline.

The rope swing near the second bridge has known better days, and I haven't seen anyone using it for years. The water here isn't deep, but visitors could be fooled into perceiving depth when the water turns dark brown in its brackish state.

A great aspect of the preserve is that once you enter, you leave the world of

cars and noise behind. Although not far from Biscayne Boulevard, the area feels very, very far from the rush. You hear the breeze.

Probably the best thing about the preserve is that it exists. If surrounding areas become more developed, at least this area will maintain some wildness.

This year the area just outside the preserve has been enhanced with paved parking and an extended sidewalk. The trail lacks night lighting and could be

considered dangerously isolated, but that aspect gives the trail more integrity because wild things thrive where humans are unwelcome.

This place was lost, and then the Arch Creek East Environmental Preserve was found. Sometimes our community leaders do the right thing and make the world a better, greener place.

This preserve deserves its own video.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Animal Zombies? Of Course!

A Halloween answer to one of life's puzzlements

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

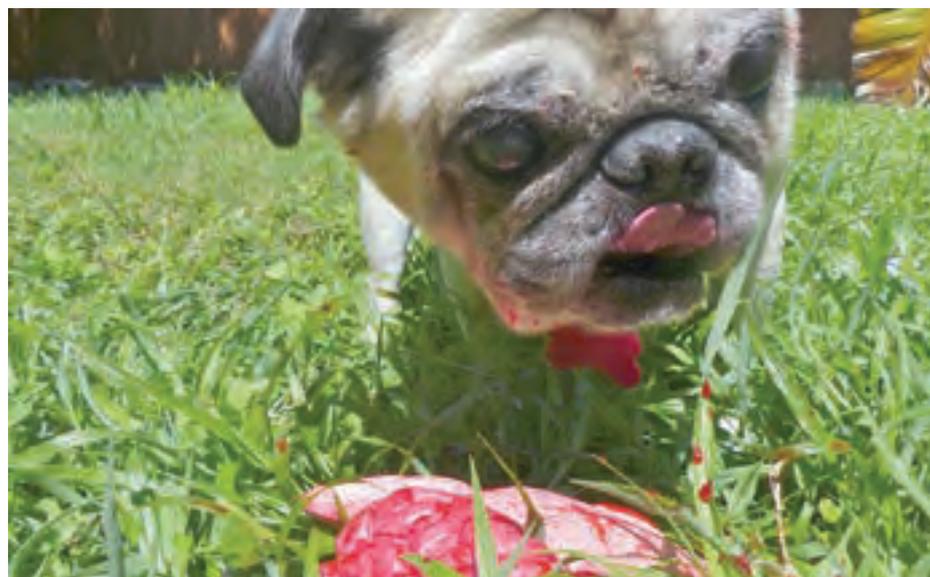
I'll admit it; I've always been in favor of a Zombie Apocalypse. What an excellent, if messy, way to wipe out human beings! (It's going to be the end of the world, after all, so you're going to need more than some Mop & Glo to make this baby shine).

I take no issue with this kind of ending because, on the whole, I don't like my kind. For the most part, we're an arrogant, selfish lot, far too busy being snide and boastful about how evolved we are to notice that we've singlehandedly raped our planet and, in doing so, ensured that it will be uninhabitable, which

will lead to our subsequent demise.

Who does that? Which other species is stupid enough to effectively annihilate its only place to live? Whadda bunch of morons! I mean, given this knowledge, I ask you, are our brains even worth eating? The zombies are going to starve! The Idiocy Diet contains zero calories. Oh, wait. You, dear reader, are one of them — er, us. Never mind.

Well, as the saying goes, you can't fix stupid, and I think we deserve what we get. And while every generation has had its own idea of how THE END would come to pass, be it in the form of nukes or a Nutella tsunami (hmmm... Nutella sounds good right about now), the one scenario we brain-trusts are currently focused on comes or, more accurately,



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

No actual humans or dogs were harmed in this photo shoot.

lurches or runs (depending on which movie you're watching) at us in the form of a half-limbed, glassy-eyed, gooey, and insatiable (guess Weight Watchers won't cut it this time) womanmanbeastthing. In other words: zombies.

Okay, then. As another saying goes, things could always be worse, and so it is with the Zombie Apocalypse scenario.

At least, finally, the nonhuman animals catch a break! At least for a while, until they starve to death, which arguably is a worse fate to suffer than zombification.

But let's brush that aside for now and focus on a planet without people, where animals roam free (yes, I'm conjuring up images of the Great Plains and happy bison).

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While you might not be a horror genre fanatic, chances are you've seen a zombie movie or watched an episode of *The Walking Dead* on television. Or, given that we're talking about Miami here, if you've simply tried to purchase any item in any store or placed a phone call seeking assistance with anything whatsoever, you've probably dealt with a person suffering from a mild case of zombiosis. Point being, we're already a pretty thick bunch as it is. Do I need to explain that again?

You may have noted that in non-zombie-centered films, the nonhuman animals symbolize innocence and purity. This is too bad for them because they're always the first to be killed. Their deaths serve as foreshadowing for what will happen to the hapless humans.

But in *Zombie World*, those same dogs, cows, and kangaroos that would be tortured, slaughtered, and (what happens to kangaroos? Anyone?) are left unmarred, content to sleep, hop about, or chew their cud, minus the fear of transforming into a soulless twin with a desire to cannibalize.

In *Zombie Land*, Old Yeller returns, nobody messes with Bambi, that rabbit

does not meet its maker on a stovetop, birds don't crash into buildings and break their necks.

Hmmm. What gives? Turns out, there are quite a few hypotheses on this topic, which is great because I only have one: Nonhuman animals are recognized in fiction for what they really are in life — i.e., better than us.

That's nice, but it won't suffice, I know. I trawled the Internet and quickly discovered the first worthwhile reason why Spot doesn't turn a human into a spot. Of goo.

According to Nerd #1 posting on the Science Fiction & Fantasy Stack Exchange forum, the zombie pathogen is not zoonotic, or can't be transmitted from one species to another. That seems plausible, especially considering that, really, we don't know if we're dealing with bacteria or fungi or if the zombie sickness is even a virus.

On the same forum, Nerd #2 deviated from science and suggested that non-human animals *could* be zombified but remain asymptomatic. They could also be carriers. I kind of like that idea.

operated by whatever operates zombies. Honey Boo Boo? The Kardashians? The guy behind the deli counter? That one is wide open to interpretation.

The next suggestion is so obvious, apparently nobody ever thought of it. In an interview with Huffington Post, Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead* comic book series creator, had a really easy answer as to why non-human animals don't zombify: *The Walking Dead* comic book artist does not like to draw animals. Just people and zombies. Oh.

Well, there's a buzz kill. Luckily, that answer is only applicable to one zombie scenario. So let's move on. Assuming a virus or bacteria caused zombification, it still might not be easy to cross-transmit, according to "Zombie Secrets." The Ebola virus, for example, is usually only found in monkeys. A virus has to evolve significantly to be able to be contracted by another species. That sounds kind of like the non-zoonotic zombie virus answer.

Another theory is that nonhuman animals *could* be zombified but remain asymptomatic. They could also be carriers. I kind of like that idea.

Sample scenario: An abused dog bites his owner after a particularly fierce

beating and within minutes the worthless human passes out, then wakes up and begins convulsing and frothing and grunting. He stands up but no longer has the ability to figure out how to open the door, so he just keeps smacking his face into it. Yeah, buddy!

Unfortunately, in my research of this extremely newsworthy topic, I came across an article that pretty much debunked all chances of a Zombie Apocalypse actually occurring. In this article at Cracked.com, the arguments were provided that since a zombie is essentially walking dead meat, it would be susceptible to decomposition, just the same as any other hunk o' dead meat.

The bad news there is that the zombie would (depending on the climate) combust after a short while, owing to gaseous buildup, leaving behind nothing but a melted zombsicle.

There is always a silver lining, though, and that is I now have a fantastic Halloween costume idea: an exploding Zombie. Go ahead, just try to find that at Party City!

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Cuban Import: 50 Years of Dominoes

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul S. George
Special to the *BT*

It would be hard to overstate the impact of the vast Cuban influx to Miami in the past half-century. Until the 1960s, Miami was a city with its roots in the Deep South.

But change was already in the air in the early postwar period as Cubans and Puerto Ricans flocked to old Miami neighborhoods like Riverside, Shenandoah, and Wynwood. According to one historian, Greater Miami, on the eve of Fidel Castro's

takeover of Cuba in 1959, already contained 40,000 Cubans, many of whom had fled the island after Fulgencio Batista took control of it for a second time in 1952.

By the early 1960s, today's Little Havana, which evolved from the Shenandoah and Riverside neighborhoods, contained many Cuban refugees, who quickly energized areas suffering from the flight of residents and businesses to the new western suburbs, as well as to Miami Beach.

These new entries brought many elements of their culture with them, and began transforming their neighborhoods,



Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, #CM-13907- JPG

including newly minted Little Havana.

One of the most popular activities for many Cubans has been dominoes, introduced in their homeland by the Spanish centuries earlier.

In this photograph, taken in 1979, several men are playing this popular game in Domino Park, officially called Maximo Gómez Park, on the south side of SW 8th Street and 15th Avenue.

The park was formerly a vacant lot that began to host dominoes games in

1963. It continues to attract large numbers of players, and even larger numbers of visitors daily in the most active area of Little Havana.

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

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Spooky Fungi for Halloween

What lies beneath those carcass mushrooms and dead man's fingers?

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

I write a good bit about fungi and see many different species in my work as a horticulturist. As a hobbyist, I enjoy growing, sometimes collecting, and eating the more tasty and non-poisonous species. Writing about a recent fungal sighting is appropriate, considering that Halloween is just around the corner.

It irks me that many plants and trees die prematurely simply because they were planted in the wrong place, in a location that can't support them because of a lack of nutrients, water, or sunlight.

Early one morning, I was inspecting the carcass of a palm tree that had suffered this fate. The multi-trunked swamp palm never got enough water at its site, struggled for years, and eventually died. While inspecting the remains of the trunk, I came upon a very appropriately named (for October) fungus, Dead Man's Fingers. The fungus *Xylaria polymorpha* is a saprobe, a decomposer of dead wood. I often find it growing on the trunks and branches of dead or decaying trees.

When found growing out of the ground from buried decaying wood, it forms upright structures that resemble fingers sticking up through the earth. You can see the fingerlike projections in the photo that accompanies this article. Pretty cool. The structures, called

stromata, are just masses of fungal tissue that bear reproductive spores for this funky-looking wood decomposer. I think it would be a great fungus to cultivate for a Halloween display.

Then there are the carcass mushrooms or the corpse finders. These are certain species of fungi often found growing in the immediate area of buried mammalian carcasses. The fungi don't actually grow out of the carcasses but utilize the released nitrogen and perhaps other nutrients from the decomposing body.

This area around the buried remains is called the cadaver decomposition island. I'm certain one of the many CSI television programs will be soon featuring a bed of these little brown mushrooms as a crime scene indicator and the post-burial interval, meaning the time between the burial of the carcass and the appearance of these particular mushroom species. This would be another cool Halloween display.

I wrote this article during a recent trip through Nicaragua. Looking for fungi was not the main purpose for the visit; however I'm always on the lookout for new and unusual species. I wasn't disappointed by any lack of fungi. One species in particular was one of the "fairy ring species."

I was photographing calabash trees in a cow pasture when I came across one of these interesting formations. These are not uncommon in South Florida; at times



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

Dead man's fingers for Halloween.

we see them in lawns.

The mushrooms that make up the fairy ring are just another brown nondescript species, but they're often found in an almost perfect circle, sometimes several feet in diameter.

The rings I found in the Nicaraguan cow pasture were almost 15 feet in diameter. Some of the mushrooms were the size of dinner plates. I didn't have the nerve to investigate further in an attempt to identify the species, as some of the cows took notice of me and made sure that I didn't come closer. Another cool Halloween idea — mystery fairy rings!

Folks, please don't e-mail me after reading this article to ask me if I found other types of mushrooms associated with the cow pasture. I made sure that I didn't see any other species at this site.

While in Nicaragua, I spent some time hiking up a couple of volcanoes. I always enjoy searching for interesting plants and animals, and since it was raining almost every day, I knew to be on the lookout for fungi. On one hike I almost stepped on a group of earth stars. These are distinctly star-shaped, about the size of a half dollar, and always growing on the ground.

I've also found this species, or a similar species, occasionally growing in our local South Florida landscapes. What could possibly cause these mushrooms to have perfectly shaped stars on them? It almost conjures up images of the occult.

The highlight of my fungus finds was an amazing stinkhorn mushroom. It smelled really bad, just like our local red stinkhorn, but was different in many ways. It was softball size, almost totally white, and the entire mushroom, except the half-dollar-size cap, was nothing but a delicate white veil. Hmmm, what evil could be cloaked by that diaphanous fungus?

I wish someone would create a Halloween display based upon the spooky connections fungi have with us. A good scare is just around the corner. All you need a little imagination and a good bit of creativity.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Pinterest, Moms, and the New Self-esteem

Domestic goddesses are the new Internet rockers

By Crystal Brewé
BT Contributor

Recently a friend of mine posted a link on Facebook to the Bitchin Sisters' blog. Following the link to their entry "Back-to-School Pinterest Bitches" (because how could I not?) led me to a series of Pinterest photos of adorably decorated school items most mothers wouldn't have time to create, much less have professionally photographed. The Bitchin Sisters, working moms who write the blog, nailed their responses to the Pinterest photos; in fact, the blog entry has gone viral.

It included a professionally lit photo of Rolo candy rolls decorated to resemble yellow pencils, a professionally lit photo of a "first day of school" breakfast that would induce first-day-of-school "explosive diarrhea," and groupings of professionally lit crafted projects that made the Bitchin Sisters want to scream, "Sweet Baby Jesus in the sky, why do people have to be so crafty?"

Is it me or has social media given rise to domestic activity? I have to admit it, Pinterest tends to make me feel bad about myself. Are Pinterest and Etsy the new *Cosmo* and *Glamour*?

Forget worrying that you aren't as skinny as that starving model, now you should feel bad that you aren't as crafty as *that* mom. This taps into something way more emotional.

My mom sewed her own clothes when she was growing up because she had six siblings and an unsupported sense of style. She sewed *my* clothes because she could. She was a stay-at-home mom, and she liked the challenge.

I don't sew. I *could* sew. I know *how* to sew. I just don't *want* to sew.

I do grow vegetables, however. I don't do it to prove anything. I do it because it feels good to watch things grow and I like to sit in my backyard with a glass of wine (or three) after a "hair on fire" day at the office and just watch my urban oasis grow. This isn't a new hobby for me, either. I've had a garden since college. The difference is, I now take pictures of my garden and post them to social media. OMG! I'm perpetuating this!

We've come a long way, baby. Will this trend toward domestic goddess-making get us right back into the predicament we were in 40 years ago, baby? What is motivating this movement? Has the long struggle for women to succeed in male-dominated and inflexible workplaces forced us to seek pride in the very things we were railing against in the first place?

Thinking about my own motivations got me talking to friends who either loathed or loved this new movement. With the exception of a guy friend who raises chickens in his Brooklyn backyard and my enlightened husband, it is mainly women attracted to this trend, most of



Photo courtesy of gigglesgalore.net

The "explosive diarrhea" first-day-of-school breakfast.

whom are well-educated but either quit their jobs to devote time to their kids or were just jaded by the rat race.

To most, it isn't just a hobby, it's a lifestyle. The levels to which people embrace it varies: Some knit, some make jewelry, some bake. Quite a few of them have micro-businesses to sell their wares on Etsy.

A couple dabble in beekeeping or even moved to neo-homesteading. What the hell is neo-homesteading? I found that the vague definition applies to a group of people who, concerned with health, food safety, and climate change, find satisfaction in living off the land instead of from general commerce.

It's funny to me, though, that a movement which has given birth to an urge to get back to basics and step away from our Internet culture at the same time gives us the urge to tell everyone about it *on the Internet*.

Homeward Bound, a new book by Emily Mather, points out that, for years, stay-at-home moms were dismissed because what they did wasn't considered "work." We weren't able to see what the Joneses were having for dinner and we certainly didn't vote on what color to

paint their baby's nursery through Facebook likes.

Matcher points out that these tasks were historically invisible, but once given a platform, they got sexy. It became "punk rock" to crochet, and moms started blogging. Respect for what had often been considered "women's work" has been reignited, and now women are moving in droves to reclaim it.

And why not? Hubby and the kids may not thank you for the Sunday morning eggs Benny, but once you put the recipe and photo online, all your friends will "like" it. My fear is that, like so many things, we might be overdoing it. Everything is just so... perfect.

The YouTube video I watched on how to grow your own sprouts seemed way overproduced, and that picture my friend posted of her mock-tuna casserole was totally Photoshopped.

For now I'll skip the canned jam *and* the corner office and continue my quest for perfect balance. But it's hard to argue that a Pinterest-perfect life wouldn't be... well, perfect.

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Miami Shores Goes Green Day

The annual street fair gets an environmental makeover

By Jim W. Harper
BT Contributor

Before Halloween, go green at the annual Miami Shores street fair. On October 26, main street shuts down and tables of plants go up to celebrate Green Day, the new name for the village's biggest tradition.

"They changed the theme because people in our community are concerned about the environment," says Ivonne Ledesma, a first-term Miami Shores Councilwoman. "Green Day is going to be an amazing, family-fun day, guaranteed."

The event got a makeover this year by the chamber of commerce, and pulls together a large local contingent of services, vendors, and fun-makers with a message: Make each day a little greener.

Green Day demonstrates that community feeling can be cultivated. Just imagine if such an event were so popular that it demanded the creation of a pedestrian shopping district, such as Lincoln Road. The street aspect is just as noteworthy as the new theme, which also shows a growing sense of awareness in a region often criticized for lacking much of an environmental consciousness.

"We're just thrilled to be able to bring together so many green-oriented and ecologically conscious businesses, vendors, institutions, and like-minded individuals to celebrate fall and highlight the many ways each of us can make this world a better place," adds Lance

Harke, president of the Greater Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce. "We hope it will be the start of something big for our community and for South Florida in general."

The fair attracts crowds to the area around Starbucks, on NE 2nd Avenue. By closing six blocks to traffic, the event encourages a walkable community with less reliance on cars and fossil fuels. The fair runs from 3:00 p.m. till 8:00 p.m.

Food trucks, wine and beer, and live music give an adult appeal to the kid-friendly event. A sense of Americana pervades, making it a fitting preview to the following month's Thanksgiving Day parade in North Miami.

Green Day's parade aspect is, as Emily Dickinson would say, "the people who go to the show." High-income families, low-income students from Barry University, and lots of tweens can be expected to circulate among the many booths. Come early to grab samples before they run out.

Environmentally friendly demonstrations include Home Depot's clinics for children and FPL's "Your Home's Energy Assessment," which offers proven methods to save money while reducing energy consumption.

Miss Claudia's "Zumba Dance for Tots" shakes, rattles, and rolls the kids, and plenty of displays appeal to the more active crowd. Barry University hosts a Sports Village, Primal Fit Miami ties up a rope challenge, and Miami Shores Rotary sponsors a rock climbing wall, giving you the opportunity to ascend 20 feet above sea level, an important skill in



a region threatened by sea-level rise.

Transportation in South Florida needs a green makeover, and solutions will be featured on the street. "Bike Alley" offers a "bike valet," giving people on two wheels the same feeling of superiority granted to those on four. In the four-wheeled category, look for hybrid and electric vehicles on display.

"I really love my hybrid vehicle," said Councilwoman Ledesma, "and I hope that more people will catch the inspiration to make the switch."

At the cheaper end of the spectrum, shop for plants and snacks from a large and eclectic assortment of vendors (although Miami Shores may seem less "eclectic" than surrounding areas, the event attracts the region's diversity of characters and inspired offerings).

Local participants at Green Day include the Fruit & Spice Park, Bakeshop Miami, Biscayne Unitarian Church, Blue Moon Kayak, the Native Plant Society, Doctors Charter School, GG Salon and Spa, Shores Holistic Health, and Mr. Solar. Several nurseries will be selling plants, and nonprofits such as TREEmendous Miami will be recruiting members to help plant more trees. And of course *Biscayne Times* will be there.

Health goes hand in hand with a greener lifestyle, and visitors will learn

about nutrition and bag fruit and veggies from a farmers market. Learn to grow your own at demonstrations of edible gardening. More details about Green Day are available online at www.miamishores.com/greenday.

Miami Shores is taking a risk with this theme, considering that it is not the greenest municipality on the block. Then again, what city in our region is? Miami Shores does a good job of eliminating litter within a highly manicured environment, but it lacks a nature preserve or even a large stand of native plants. It could turn much greener by going browner, allowing the cold-climate American dream of a neon-green lawn to fade into a Caribbean landscape of spruce-green shrubs and rock gardens.

The Village Beautiful can also reinstate something that New York City started recently: the collection and composting of yard waste. Miami Shores had this program in the past, and without great cost or effort it can happen again.

See you at Green Day. Let's celebrate everything good and green.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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October Treats of the Vine

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

The trajectory of Halloween from pagan harvest festival to pagan commercial festival is both interesting and instructive.

It began, we're told, with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, a celebration of the end of harvest season and a time when, the ancient Celts believed, the spirits of the dead would rise and torment the living, like Sylvester Stallone continuing to make movies. The wearing of costumes in an attempt to hide from these vengeful spirits is related to this belief, though people wearing disguises to the latest *Expendables* opus are likely doing so more out of embarrassment than fear.

At some point, pagan festivities took on some of the trappings of the Christian All Saints' Day (a.k.a. All Hallows' Eve, a.k.a. Halloween). Among those trappings was the practice of "souling" (a.k.a. "trick-or-treating"), where the poor went door-to-door begging for food, a practice many modern-day Christians are trying to revive by cutting unemployment benefits and food stamps.

Nowadays, however, Halloween is less about ancient festivals than it is about tooth decay (for kids) and an excuse (for adults) to dress up like zombies or pirates or Sarah Palin, and act out their inner whackjob.

What does all this Halloween business have to do with wine?

Tricks and treats, people. Tricks and treats. It has to do with walking into your favorite liquor store (in this case, stores) with no list or plan in mind except to cruise the aisles looking for wines that might be a treat to your palate. You might get a couple of tricks, too (there's a particularly nasty one here). But it's all about the element of discovery and surprise, kind of like finding a flaming bag of dogshit on your doorstep.

Happy Halloween!

Let's get the trick out of the way first. It's not quite a flaming bag of ... you know. But the **2011 Casal Garcia Vinho Verde Rosé** is a truly crappy wine, a fizzy brownish-pink liquid, tasting vaguely of strawberries with pungent notes of lighter fluid. Yummy.

Thankfully, it gets better from here. There's nothing all that unusual about Chilean Sauvignon Blancs. They make a ton of them. But they're uniformly inexpensive and well made, hitting the precise midpoint between austere New Zealand and fruity California. And for \$6.99? The **2012 Viña Caballero** is pretty tough to beat. But hurry! That sale price expires on October 8.

If you haven't already noticed, I'm a real fan of Chilean wines. Especially Carmenère, the big, earthy, intensely berry-ish wine formerly thought to be Merlot. The **2011 Vista Mar Sepia Reserva Carmenère** doubles down on all that, adding an intriguing smoky-tarry quality that gives it a mysterious edge.

Sticking with the big reds brings us to the **2010 Coppola Rosso**, a blend of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and Petite Syrah. It's the kind of wine you'd expect from someone given to grand gestures, like Francis Ford — bold, lush, fruit-driven, like eating a handful of fresh blackberries — a hearty red-sauce-and-pasta wine.

Sticking with big red blends brings us to the **2010 La Croix de Bila-Haut Cotes Catalanes**. This mélange of Syrah, Grenache, and Carignan splits the difference between the Carmenère and the Rosso, with the former's earthy, chocolate, spicy tones and the latter's bracing black and blue cherry-berry fruit. Soft tannins and a relatively low (13 percent) alcohol help keep it from becoming cloying.

From big reds to lean whites, especially since this month brings the reopening of stone crab season, just about the best reason there is to consume crisp, citrusy white wines that take to seafood like a fish does to ... well, water.

One of the most underappreciated (and affordable) fish-friendly wines is Muscadet, made from the Melon de Bourgogne grape in the Loire Valley. Like most Muscadets, the **2011 Domaine de la Chauvinière** is no fruit bomb, but rather a wine of some subtlety, with refreshing lemon-lime flavors and a hint of minerals, finishing with a long, lemony tang.



The Aventura and North Miami Whole Foods Markets (21105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-682-4400; 12150 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-5500) is where you'll find the estimable Viña Caballero Sauvignon Blanc for \$6.99, on sale till October 8. Publix (14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171 and 1776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-3433) has the Coppola Rosso for \$7.99, while the North Miami Beach Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) has the Vista Mar Carmenère for \$9.99 and the Oak Grove Viognier for \$8.99. Finally, the North Miami Beach ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) offers the Bila-Haut blend for \$11.79 and the Muscadet for \$9.89.

On the richer, fruitier end of the equation is Viognier. While I love the grape's typical rich, floral-honeysuckle character, what I like about the **2012 Oak Grove Viognier** is the balancing green apple-pear-citrus acidity that makes it an exceptionally good food wine. Like the rest of these wines, it really is a treat for your palate.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Into the Growing Season

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

As gardeners throughout North America harvest the last of their late-season veggies, planted months ago, Miamians go our own way, as usual.

October is peak produce-planting month here. And those who'd like their holiday tables full of homegrown heirloom tomatoes (including the fancy purple, black, zebra-stripe sorts that cost \$5-\$6 a pound at markets), plus some other produce impossible to find in local markets at any price (like Spain's superb sweet Padron peppers), will want to check out the Little River Market Garden's fourth annual seedling sale on October 19, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Roughly 25 varieties of proprietor Muriel Olivares' five- to six-week-old, organically grown tomato plants, plus other big, strong herb and veggie seedlings, are only \$2 to \$4 each. Cash only, but you get a free plant for every 20 bucks spent. For further info, including the address: www.littlerivercsa.com/?page_id=1378.

And a road-trip alert for those wanting an educational and fun crash course in growing, foraging, buying, preparing, and eating local, seasonal food: the second annual GrowFest! is scheduled for October 19-20 at the Redland's Fruit & Spice Park (24801 SW 187th Ave.)

Featured will be starter plants, gardening supplies, workshops, healthy eats, more. For info and discounted advance tickets (\$8), visit www.beeheavenfarm.com.

OPENINGS

Lippi (600 Brickell Ave., 305-579-1888). This indoor/outdoor spot has been one of 2013's most anticipated openings, though under a different original name: Restaurant du Cap. Right, the place that's been generating buzz since way back when nationally acclaimed chef Philippe Ruiz left his longtime post at the Biltmore's Palme d'Or, where, in the late 1990s, he pioneered the concept of small-plate meals at the formerly rather stuffy traditional French restaurant. The shareable concept remains here. Décor is much more tropically inviting than at his old digs — elegant but expansively light. Ambiance is hip, not surprising considering partner Tunu Puri from Zuma. And the cuisine, though officially described as Mediterranean-inspired New American, is eons more inventive and unique than either tired old genre name suggests. Welcome back, Philippe food.

Spris Artisan Pizza (200 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-6667) is a new location of the Lincoln Road pizzeria (owned by GrazianoSbroggio's Grasp Group) that introduced authentic Neopolitan brick-oven pies back in Miami's pre-2000 pizza Dark Ages. Fifteen years later, the beautifully burn-bubbled pies are still among our town's best.



Don Nicola Pizzeria (3585 Mystic Pointe Dr., Aventura, 786-916-2028). Named for the Italian-born mentor of Argentinean-born chef/owner Manuel Hiraldo, this eatery isn't easy to find. It's located inside a gated Aventura community. Once you run the security guard gauntlet, the indoor/outdoor restaurant's designer-fashionable but very affordable pizzas, made with quality imported ingredients, come with marina views.

L'Entrecote de Paris (1053 SE 1st Ave., 305-755-9995). This Parisian restaurant with locations in Brazil, is one where ordering choices are no problem, since there's just one prix fixe meal on the menu: an entrecote steak with 21-ingredient (here, mainly curry) sauce, accompanied by a walnut-garnished, mixed green salad, unlimited frites, and crisp-crustéd baguette. Desserts or a daily-changing cheese platter are à la carte.

Seven (28 NE 40th St., 305-456-3041). In the long-vacant outdoor space that once housed the Design District's original splashy restolounge Grass, this glam eats/drinks "Garden of Eden" is named for foodies' favorite of the Seven Deadly Sins: gluttony. The eclectic, globally influenced menu reads like a Top 40 list of today's biggest hits — truffle fries, bacon-wrapped stuffed dates, sliders,

charcuterie and cheese boards, ceviches, tartares. Interestingly, the price of sin is small; everything except a few full entrées runs \$6-\$20.

CLOSINGS

Bloom (2751 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5443). This hip Wynwood restaurant, just a year old, featured creative interpretations of Asian and Latin American street foods. It folded too close to press time for digging up details beyond a nonspecific but hopeful note on Bloom's Facebook and Twitter pages saying, "We will be opening in a new location."

If you notice that **Naoe** (661 Brickell Key Dr., 205-947-6263) perfectionist chef/owner Kevin Cory's nationally acclaimed omakase (chef's choice) Japanese/sushi restaurant is shuttered, don't panic. An e-mail just received from Cory explains that the closing is just for construction: "Maybe reopen by mid-November." So breathe easier — but don't actually hold your breath. His adjacent, more casual eatery/lounge, scheduled to open October 2012, is still in the works.

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

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 290.

Restaurant listings for the BT Dining Guide are written by Pamela Robin Brandt (restaurants@biscaynetimes.com). Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, but restaurants frequently change menus, chefs, and operating hours, so please call ahead to confirm information. Icons (\$\$\$) represent estimates for a typical meal without wine, tax, or tip. Hyphenated icons (\$-\$\$\$) indicate a significant range in prices between lunch and dinner menus, or among individual items on those menus.

=\$ \$10 and under

\$\$= \$20

\$\$\$= \$30

\$\$\$\$= \$40

\$\$\$\$\$= \$50 and over

MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

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

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

Area 31
270 Biscayne Boulevard Way, 305-424-5234

Not that the sleek interior of this seafood restaurant (named for fishing area 31, stretching from the Carolinas to South America) isn't a glamorous dining setting. But we'd eat outside. From the expansive terrace of the Epic condo and hotel on the Miami River, the views of Brickell's high-rises actually make Miami look like a real city. It's hard to decide whether the eats or drinks are the most impressive. The food is impeccably fresh regional fish, prepared in a clean Mediterranean-influenced style. The cocktails are genuinely creative. Luckily you don't have to choose one or the other. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

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 seeker 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; Asianesque pork-belly sliders) highlights are items that chef Will Biscoe stamps with his own unique, unpretentiously inventive touches, from small plates (housemade potato chips with blue cheese fondue) to large (a long-bone short rib "chop" with truffle popover; South Florida bouillabaisse). More than 30 craft beers accompany. \$\$-\$\$\$

Blue Martini
900 S. Miami Ave. #250, 305-981-2583

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

Bonding
638 S. Miami Ave., 786-409-4794

From trend-spotting restaurateur Bond Trisansi (originator of Mr. Yum and 2B Asian Bistro), this small spot draws a hip crowd with its affordable menu of redesigned traditional Thai dishes, wildly imaginative sushi makis, and unique signature Asian fusion small plates. Highlights include tastebud-tickling snapper carpaccio; an elegant nest of mee krob (sweet, crisp rice noodles); blessedly non-citrus-drenched tuna tataki, drizzled with spicy-sweet mayo and wasabi cream sauce; greed-inducing "bags of gold," deep-fried wonton beggar's purses with a shrimp/pork/mushroom/waterchestnut filling and tamarind sauce. \$

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

Though independently owned instead of a chain cog, this cheese and wine café/snop 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 picanhas, delectably fat-capped sirloin. For more modern and/or light eaters, prepared dishes by Gully Booth, one of Miami's best-kept-secret chefs, include goat cheese croquettes, stuffed dates, and crab cakes Martha Stewart once proclaimed the best she'd eaten. \$\$\$

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

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

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL/DOWNTOWN

Barú Urbano
1001 S. Miami Ave., 305-381-5901

"Hot, hip, Hispanic" is a huge understatement to describe the street-smart urban flair of this tropical restolounge. After about 9:00 p.m., droves of high-energy young partiers make the place seem more Latin singles bar than eatery. Nevertheless, the largely but not exclusively Colombian-inspired, Latin/Caribbean comfort-food cuisine can be inspiring. We're partial to snacks like the arepa Colombiana, heaped with fresh white cheese, and the sinful chivito sandwich (steak, ham, melted mozzarella, and a fried egg). But there are also full entrées like a bandeja paisa (Colombia's belly-busting mixed platter of proteins and carbs). \$\$-\$\$\$

Box Park
1111 SW 1st Ave., 305-356-8385

This sibling to The Hoxton (Northeastern shorestyle) couldn't be more dramatically different in décor (modern minimalist rather than time-trippy beach house) or food (Florida regional, rather than New England). If you want to try alligator that's more than mere novelty, it's available fried with datil pepper sauce or in a rich gumbo with wild boar andouille. We find the home-cured charcuterie platter (featuring whipped lardo, duck prosciutto, amberjack jerky, wild boar finocchiona salami, more) perfect, especially accompanied by "Brickell pickles," bracing house-fermented local veggies. Menus change seasonally, and never bore. \$\$-\$\$\$

Sumi Yakitori
21 SW 11th St., 786-360-5570

If your definition of yakitori has been formed from typical Americanized sticky-sweet skewers, this late-night place's grilled offerings, flavored with the subtly smoky savor of imported Japanese binchotan charcoal will be a revelation. Décor is more stunningly stylish than at chef/owner Jeffrey Chan's adjacent Momi Ramen, but cooking is equally authentic stuff like skewered duck (served with scallion sauce), juicy sausage-stuffed chicken wings, bacon-wrapped hard-boiled quail eggs, or grilled hamachi kama (super succulent yellowtail collar). Supplemental dishes, including pork buns and sautéed veggies, also excel. \$\$\$

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ceviche Piano
140 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414

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

Wolfgang's Steakhouse
315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-487-7130

Proprietor Wolfgang Zweiner worked for decades at Brooklyn's legendary Peter Luger's before opening the first of his own much-praised, old-school steakhouses in 2003, which explains the quality of the USDA prime-grade steaks here — dry-aged on premises for bold, beefy flavor and tender but toothsome texture. Prices are prodigious but so are portions. The 32-ounce porterhouse for two easily feeds three or four folks curious to taste the difference. Plentiful sides include a bacon starter favored by those who love Canadian bacon over pork belly. Personally, just the simple, superb steaks leave us happy as clams. \$\$\$\$

UPPER EASTSIDE

Mina's Mediterraneo
749 NE 79th St., 786-391-0300

Unlike most restaurants labeled "Mediterranean," this one, decorated with restrained modern elegance, really does have dishes from countries surrounding all sides of the sea (though not necessarily from the countries' seaside regions, as boeuf Bourguignon attests). Our favorites, like owner Yasmine Kott, whose heritage is Egyptian-via-Texas, and her mom, the chef, are those featuring exotic Eastern/North African tastes — with twists. Especially fun: Egypt's besara, a light fava-based hummus; falafel "sliders" in warm pita with Israeli salad, slaw, and tahini; and an unusual side of grilled kale with yogurt dressing and hazelnuts. \$\$

AVENTURA

Soho Asian Bar & Grill
19004 NE 29th St., 305-466-5656

Do bring your pocket flashlight to this kosher restaurant. Considering the menu's expansiveness, you'll be doing lots of reading despite dim, lounge-lizard lighting. The stars here are small plates and over-the-top Asian fusion sushi rolls, like the Korean: short ribs atop a kimchee-garnished maki of puréed avocado, cucumber, scallion, and sweet potato. But the menu of tapas and entrées ranges from Japanese-inspired items to pad Thai, Middle Eastern kabobs, Chinese-American pepper steak, even all-American grilled steaks. Highlights: signature fried cauliflower with chili sauce, and an appealing house nut bread with three spreads. \$\$\$

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

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

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

With a Zuma alum in the kitchen, a Gigi alum crafting classic or creative cocktails, a warm pub feel, and hours extending from lunch to nearly breakfast the next morning, The Corner is transforming a desolate downtown corner into a neighborhood hang-out. The nicely priced menu of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and sweets (the latter from Om Nom Nom's cookie queen Anthea Ponsetti) ranges from 100-percent homemade ice cream sandwiches to the Crazy Madame, France's elaborate Croque Madame (a béchamel sauce-topped grilled cheese/ham/fried egg sandwich) plus bacon and caramelized onion. \$\$\$

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

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

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

Fusion food — a modern invention? Not in Peru, where native and Euro-Asian influences have mixed for more than a century. But chef Juan Chivno 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. \$



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

Edge, Steak & Bar

1435 Brickell Ave., 305-358-3535

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

Elwoods Gastro Pub

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

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

Eos

485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroy Hotel), 305-503-0373

Originally opened by Michelin-starred "New Aegean" chef Michael Psilakis, Eos changed upon the chef's departure into a more familiar Mediterranean resort eatery, minus Greek-inspired innovations. Now inspiration comes mainly from Spain and Italy, with nods to Morocco and Latin America. Best bets include a tasting platter of Spanish cheeses and cured meats; a pistachio-garnished salad featuring Serrano ham, figs, and arugula; crispy parmesan risotto balls with prosciutto and smoked tomato dip; and olive/smoked paprika-rubbed roast chicken. At lunch burgers and upscale sandwiches are added. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Fado Irish Pub

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

Unlike most Miami "Irish" pubs, which serve mostly American bar food, rarely foraying past fish and chips or shepherd's pie, Fado (pronounced "f' doe") has a menu reflecting the pub grub found today in Ireland, including solid standards. But most intriguing are dishes mixing classic and contemporary influences, particularly those featuring boxty, a grated/mashed potato pancake. Try corned beef rolls (boxty wraps, with creamy mustard sauce and cabbage slaw), or smoked salmon on mini-boxty "blini," with capers and horseradish sauce. There's a seasonal menu, too. \$\$

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. \$\$\$

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 Caffe

154 SE 1st Ave., 305-374-1024

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

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 panetta/mozzarella/plum-filled Americana, and several vegetarian options. At just over two bucks apiece, they're a money-saving moveable feast. \$

Hawa Jade

1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-905-5523

When thinking "fusion" cuisines, Japanese and Lebanese don't instantly spring to mind. But taking the medieval Spice Route connection as inspiration, the Hawa family makes the mix work at both its original Coral Gables Hawa and this new location in the Jade Residences. Golden Pockets (tofu crêpes encasing macadamias, avocado, and tuna, crab, shrimp, or Kobe-style beef) are musts. Plus there are unique combos containing makis plus substantial salads, like crunchy tuna enoki rolls with falafel salad – not the usual green garnish. Housemade desserts with a French twist are also a pleasant surprise. \$\$

Hibachi Grill

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

Imagine a mini-express Benihana. This place specializes in teppanyaki cuisine – minus the thrilling (or terrifying) tableside knife theatrics, true, but the one-plate meals of seasoned steak slices, chicken, shrimp, or salmon plus dipping sauces, fried rice, and an onion/zucchini mix come at bargain prices. There are also hefty soups or Japanese, Thai, and Singapore-style noodle and rice bowls loaded with veggies and choice of protein (including tofu). The limited sides are Japanese (shumai, plump chicken gyoza) and Chinese (various egg rolls). Fancy? No, but satisfying. \$\$\$

The Hoxton

1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-691-2730

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

Il Gabbiano

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

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

Jamon Iberico Pata Negra Restaurant

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

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

Largo Bar & Grill

401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706

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

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800

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

La Moon

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

At four in the morning, nothing quiets 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 day 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

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bakery's café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Niçoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thau's Provençal homeland. \$\$\$

La Sandwicherie

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

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

Le Boudoir Brickell

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

At this French bakery/café, mornings start seriously, with choices ranging from quality cheese, charcuterie/pâté, or smoked salmon platters to chic Continental and complete 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 weekend 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., 305-358-0888

Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there's an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$\$\$

Momi Ramen

5 SW 11th St., 786-391-2392

Banish all thoughts of packaged instant "ramen." Perfectionist chef/owner Jeffrey Chen (who cooked for more than a decade in Japan), changes his mostly ramen-only menu often, but constants are irresistibly chewy handmade noodles; soups based on creamy, intensely porky tonkotsu broth (made from marrow bones simmered all day); meats like pork belly and oxtail; and authentic toppings including marinated soft-cooked eggs, pickled greens, more. Other pluses: It's open 24/7, and the ramen ranks with the USA's best. Minuses: It's cash only, and the ramen might be the USA's most expensive. \$\$\$

MPP Brickell

141 SW 7th St., 305-400-4610

Tasty Peruvian eateries aren't rare in Miami. Peruvian fine-dining restaurants are. In the tastefully toned-down but still glam space formerly housing Andú, this second location of Lima's popular Mi Propiedad Privada specializes in familiar flavors presented with seriously upscaled preparations, plating, and prices. But many ceviches, tiraditos, and starters (like especially artful layered/molded mashed potato/seafood causas, or clever panko-breaded fusion "causa makis") come in trios for taste-testing. And ceviche lovers score on Tuesdays, when all-you-can-eat costs the same as a trio. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

My Ceviche

1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-960-7825

When three-time James Beard "Rising Star Chef" nominee Sam Gorenstein opened the original My Ceviche in SoBe, in 2012, it garnered national media attention despite being a tiny take-away joint. Arguably, our newer indoor/outdoor Brickell location is better. Same menu, featuring local fish prepared onsite, and superb sauces including a kicky roasted jalapeño/lime mayo), but this time with seats! What to eat? Ceviches, nacho. 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 parilla-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 entrées salads. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862

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

OTC

1250 S. Miami Ave. 305-374-4612

Over-the-counter service usually connotes the classic fast food "slider" experience: both greaseburgers and patrons are in and out quickly. At this casually cool gastropub, the counter ordering system encourages the opposite feel, of comfie congeniality; it invites hanging out, just without the fuss of formal dining out – or the expense. Most plates are \$10 or under. Ingredient-driven dishes cover today's favorite food groups (various mac-and-cheeses, variously topped/seasoned fries, and more) with some unusual twists, like a scrumptiously lardon-laden frisée/goat cheese salad brightened by fresh peaches. Even the condiments are housemade. \$\$

Ozzi Sushi

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

Since its 1958 invention, conveyor-belt sushi has been the most fun form of Japanese fast food, but problematic. Who knew how long plates had been circulating on the sushi-go-round? Happily, this sushi-boat spot avoids sanitation issues with clear plastic covers, and as for freshness, low prices ensure a steady stream of diners grabbing makis, nigiri, and more as they float by. Highlights include glistening ikura (salmon roe) in a thin-sliced cucumber cup, a sweet-sauced mango/guava/crab roll, and a festively frosted strawberry Nutella dessert maki. \$\$\$

Pasha's

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-416-5116

The original branch on Lincoln Road was instantly popular, and the same healthy Middle Eastern fast food is served at several newer outlets. The prices are low enough that you might suspect Pasha's was a tax write-off rather than a Harvard Business School project, which it was by founders Antonio Ellek and Nicolas Cortes. Dishes range from falafel and gyros to more unusual items like muhammara (tangy walnut spread) and silky labneh yogurt cheese. Everything from pitas to lemonade is made fresh, from scratch, daily. \$\$\$

Pega Grill

15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666

From Thanasis Barlos, a Greek native who formerly owned North Beach's Ariston, this small spot is more casually contemporary and less ethnic-kitschy in ambience, but serves equally authentic, full-flavored Greek food. Mixed lamb/beef gyros (chicken is also an option), topped with tangy yogurt sauce and wrapped, with greens and tomatoes, in fat warm pita bread, are specialties. But even more irresistible is the taramasalata (particularly velvety and light carp roe dip), available alone or on an olive/pita-garnished mixed meze platter. \$\$

Perricone's

15 SE 10th St., 305-374-9449

Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi focchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) – featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more – remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

Pieducks

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-808-7888

If you can overlook a name as unenlightening as most in-jokes (it evidently refers to a favorite character of owner Claudio Nunes's kids – we assume the Pokémon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-broasted 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 China (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. 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 fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

Raja's Indian Cuisine

33 NE 2nd Ave., 305-539-9551

Despite its small size and décor best described as "none," this place is an institution thanks to south Indian specialties rarely found in Miami's basically north Indian restaurants. The steam-baked 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 soffritto butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001

This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that's haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn't fear; though nachos aren't available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between freshly made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-habanero-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa's signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

Scalini

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



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inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC's Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo's specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice's famed fegato (calf's liver and onions), upscaled with Lucanica sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tartufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

Soya & Pomodoro 120 NE 1st St., 305-381-9511

Life is complicated. Food should be simple. That's owner Armando Alfano's philosophy, which is stated above the entry to his atmospheric downtown eatery. And since it's also the formula for the truest traditional Italian food (Alfano hails from Pompeii), it's fitting that the menu is dominated by authentically straightforward yet sophisticated Italian entrées. There are salads and sandwiches, too. The most enjoyable place to dine is the secret, open-air courtyard. Alfano serves dinner on Thursdays only to accompany local musicians and artists. \$\$\$

Sparky's Roadside Restaurant & Bar 204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877

This cowboy-cute eatery's chefs/owners (one CIA-trained, both BBQ fanatics nicknamed Sparky) eschew regional purism, instead utilizing a hickory/apple-wood-stoked rotisserie smoker to turn out their personalized style of slow-cooked, complexly dry-rub fusion: ribs, chopped pork, brisket, and chicken. Diners can customize their orders with mix-and-match housemade sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired vinegar/mustard, pan-Asian hoisin with lemongrass and ginger, tropical guava/habanero. Authenticity aside, the quality of the food is as good as much higher-priced barbecue outfits. \$\$\$

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

elegiant aji de gallina (walnut-garnished chicken and potatoes in peppery cream sauce). But the emphasis is on contemporary ceviches/tiraditos (those with velvety aji amarillo chili sauce particularly), plus huge exotic sushi rolls, which get pretty wild. When was the last time you encountered a tempura-battered tuna, avocado, and scallion maki topped with Peru's traditional potato garnish, huancaina cheese sauce? \$\$\$

Temaris 1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-836-2747

In Japan, temaris are ornamented hand balls, used since the Seventh Century for sport and as good luck folk-art objects. At this Japanese/Latin hot spot, temaris are reinterpreted, both playfully and artfully, as beautiful, bite-size sushi balls (each about half the size of normal nigiri): vinegary rice topped with sliced raw fish or beef, plus nipples constructed from several of the eatery's dozen-and-a-half sauces. Fancier mini-balls feature fusion combinations like spicy tuna, almonds, and tobiko, or substitute crispy rice. Normal-size makis, small plates, and desserts are also fun. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tobacco Road 626 S. Miami Ave., 305-374-1198

Prohibition-era speakeasy (reputedly a fave of Al Capone), gay bar, strip club. Previously all these, this gritty spot has been best known since 1982 as a venue for live music, primarily blues. But it also offers food from lunchtime to late night (on weekends till 4:00 a.m.). The kitchen is especially known for its chili, budget-priced steaks, and burgers. There's also surprisingly elegant fare, though, like a Norwegian salmon club with lemon aioli. A meat-smoker in back turns out tasty ribs. \$\$\$

Top Burger 109 NE 1st St., 305-379-3100

Inside this "better burger" spot, décor is so charmingly 1950s retro you almost expect to find the Fonzy leaning on a jukebox. What you actually find: hand-formed, hormone-free, 100% Angus patties (or alternatives like veggie burgers), a lightly-breaded chicken Milanese, and all-beef hot dogs on toasted buns, with fresh-cut French or sweet potato fries. Welcome surprises include an assertively spicy/tangy BBQ-like secret sauce; prices that, while not 1950s level, rival those at junkfood joints; and old-school service — the kind that comes with a smile. \$

Toro Toro 100 Chopin Plaza, 305-372-4710

Back before Miami's business district had any "there" there, the InterContinental's original restaurant was an executive lunch/dinner destination mainly by default. This replacement, from restaurant empire-builder Richard Sandoval, brings downtown power dining into this decade. As the name suggests, you can go bullish with steakhouse fare, including an abbreviated (in variety, not quantity) "rodizio experience." But the place's strongest suit is its pan-Latin small plates — upscaled refinements of classic favorites: crisp corn arepas with short rib, guacamole, and crema fresca; fluffier cachapas pancakes with tomato jam; more. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Tropicale 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 swellegant, not stuffy, and the room's intimacy makes it a romantic spot for special occasions. \$\$\$

Tre Italian Bistro 270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

"Bistro" actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "restolounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "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'gawt for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse 777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

Compared to other restaurants with such an upscale power-lunch/dinner setting, most prices are quite affordable here, especially if you stick to the Miami Spice-priced date-dinner menu, or happy hour, when seafood items like crab-cake "sliders" are half price. Most impressive, though, are seasonal stone crabs (from Truluck's own fisheries, and way less expensive than Joe's) and other seafood that, during several visits, never tasted less than impeccably fresh, plus that greatest of Miami restaurant rarities: informed and gracious service. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Tuyo 415 NE 2nd St., 305-237-3200

Atop the revolutionary Miami Culinary Institute, this upscale eatery, unlike the café downstairs, isn't student-run. Rather it's designed to showcase school ideals — including sustainability as well as definitive Miami cuisine. The changing menu, from a culinary Dream Team headed by "New World Cuisine" inventor/MCI instructor Norman Van Aken (plus former protégés Jeffrey Brana and Travis Starwalt), mixes citrus-inflected creamy conch chowder and other pioneering signatures with new inventions like mind-reelingly multidimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and burstingly ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Wok Town 119 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9993

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo Japonese veteran) May initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proff: 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 restoloounge 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 impossibly light white-and-dark chocolate mousse cake will hook you for life. \$\$\$

Basani's 3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-925-0911

Despite this tiny place's modern décor, the family-run ambiance and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic ribs, 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. \$\$\$



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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 calzons (like the blu oceano, faty 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 figuittu: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$

Bloom

2761 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5443

Miami's most innovative art district is the perfect setting for this hip hangout, whose mad-genius menu proves that food is indeed one of the creative arts. Reinvented Latin/Asian street foods from chef Ricky Sauri (ex-Nobu) include spicy Spam-topped rice cakes; tuna tartare in seaweed "tacos"; a reina pepiada arepa, whose traditional mild chicken filling is replaced by shredded duck, avocado, tangy-sweet tamarind sauce, and Japanese mayo; an especially elegant Korean bibimbap; a vegan shitake-pumpkin tamale with nutty, cheesy natto sauce. For liquid art aficionados: cocktails like the eye-popping Tequila Beets (featuring roasted beet juice). \$\$\$

Buena Vista Bistro

4582 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-5909

If a neighborhood eatery like this one — which serves supremely satisfying bistro food — were within walking distance of every Miami resident, we'd be a helluva hip food town. Like true Parisian bistros, it's open continuously, every day, with prices so low that you can drop in anytime for authentic rillettes (a rustic pâté) with a crusty baguette, steak with from-scratch frites, salmon atop ratatouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Buena Vista Deli

4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945

At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust-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. \$-\$\$

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

Cafeina

297 NW 23rd St., 305-438-0792

This elegantly comfortable multi-room indoor/outdoor venue is described as an "art gallery/lounge," and some do come just for cocktails like the hefty café con leche martinis. But don't overlook chef Guily Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no discernible binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373

Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd. 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfy neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-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 bear 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 Gruyère tuile float instead of the usual gooey 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 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 taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisped fried smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, an often heavy and cloyingly vanilla-saturated dessert, here custardy and enlivened by orange flavor. Extensive lists of mezze (snacks) and creative cocktails make the expansive, invitingly decorated space ideal for large gatherings of friends who enjoy sharing. \$\$\$

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

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, and 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



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pillow-light roast pork-stuffed buns, and possibly the world's best BLT, featuring Asian bun "toast," thick pork belly slices rather than bacon, and housemade pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$\$\$

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 Margherita to pies with house-smoked sausage, 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 Crofadia 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 tripleta 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

Across the tracks from Midtown Miami, this hidden-by-hedges spot features a patio with authentically festive ambiance and food by Alexia Apostolidi, also authentically Greek but known to locals for her critically acclaimed fare at defunct Ariston. The menu includes many mezes, 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-crust lamb at dinner and lunchtime's lamb pita wrap. Don't miss the semolina purée side – heavenly Greek cheese grits. \$\$\$

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 combread) 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. \$\$

Lemoni Café 4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill Shops at Midtown Miami Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor 3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and uzo in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$\$

Lost & Found Saloon 185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008

There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crust salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crust wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Mandolin Aegean Bistro 4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066

Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezes: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MC Kitchen 4141 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-9948

Chef/co-owner Dena Marino calls MC's food "modern Italian" – neither an evocative description nor explanation for why this place is one of our town's hottest tickets. But tasting tells the tale. Marino's food incorporates her entire culinary background, from her Nonna's traditional Italian-American kitchen to a long stint in Michael Chiarello's famed contemporary Californian eatery Tra Vigne, with pronounced personal twists that make eating here uniquely exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's "piadenas," saladlike seasonal/regional ingredient combinations atop heavenly homemade flatbreads. Cocktails feature ingredients from za arat 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 EV00. \$\$\$

Mercadito Midtown 3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423

Some people frequent this fashionable restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatty-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink 130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and choco-lette 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 *umilante* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring frittes that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crust and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar 1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000

At NoVe, the restolounge 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, focchi 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 sourpuss. \$\$\$

Pasha's 3801 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-0201 (See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Pieducks 3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550 (See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Pride & Joy 2800 N. Miami Ave., 305-456-9548

Beyond 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. \$\$\$

Sakaya Kitchen Shops at Midtown Miami, Buena Vista Avenue 305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop). But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$\$

Sake Room 275 NE 18th St., 305-755-0122

Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restolounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour Mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salad Creations 2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-5333

At this fast-casual restaurant, diners can enjoy a wide variety of chef-created salads and wraps, or go the DIY route, choosing from one of four greens options; four dozen add-ons (fresh, dried, or pickled veggies and fruits, plus cheeses and slightly sinful pleasures like candied pecans or wonton strips); a protein (seafood or poultry); and two dozen dressings, ranging from classic (Thousand Island, bleu cheese) to creative contemporary (spicy Asian peanut, cucumber wasabi, blueberry pomegranate). Additionally, the place creates lovely catering platters, plus individual lunchboxes – perfect picnic or plane food. \$\$\$

Salumeria 104 3451 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-424-9588

In Italy, salumerias started, like American delicatessens, as shops selling salumi (cured meats), but evolved into the equivalent of eat-in deli/restaurants that also serve cold and hot prepared foods. At this modern Midtown salumeria, the soups-to-salads-to-sweets range of fare is the same. Custom-sliced imported cold cuts are a main focus, especially for those who enjoy taste-testing a plate pairing Italy's two most famous prosciuttos: Parma and San Daniele. But homemade pastas are also impressive, as are hard-to-find regional entrées like fegato alla Veneziana, which will turn liver-haters into lovers. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salsa Fiesta 2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$\$

S & S Diner 1757 NE 2nd Ave., 305-373-4291

Some things never change, or so it seems at this classic diner. Open since 1938, people still line up on Saturday mornings, waiting for a seat at the counter and enormous breakfasts: corned beef hash or crab cakes and eggs with grits; fluffy pancakes; homemade biscuits with gravy and Georgia sausage – everything from oatmeal to eggs Benedict. The lunch menu is a roll call of the usual suspects, but most regulars ignore the menu and go for the daily blackboard specials. \$\$\$

Shokudo World Resource Café 4740 NE 2nd Ave., 305-758-7782

At its former Lincoln Road location, World Resource's café was better known for people-watching than for its standard sushi/

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Thai menu. But as the new name signals, this relocation is a reinvention. The indoor/outdoor space is charming, but creative takes on popular pan-Asian street foods are the real draw. Travel from Japan and Thailand through Korea, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and beyond via light housemade momo, curried potato-stuffed Tibetan/Nepalese steamed dumplings; savory pulled pork buns with kimchi and crisped onions. Noodle dishes, hot or chilled, are especially appealing. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soi Chinese Kitchen 645 NW 20th St., 305-482-0238

No chop suey. No kung pao anything, either. In fact, anything on Soi's menu that sounds like something from a normal Chinese eatery won't be: char sui ribs come with delicate corn pancakes, wonton soup is kafir lime broth with a mushroom/truffle-butter-stuffed ravioli, lo mein is housemade noodles with pork belly and sous vide 63-degree egg. Basically it's contemporary Chinese fine dining fare similar in creativity and quality ingredients to ultra-upscale Hakkasan's, but served by a tiny take-out joint (with a few patio tables and counter stools) at neighborhood prices. \$\$

Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill 3250 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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 unseemly 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 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scallion, ginger, cilantro, and subtly sweet/salty sauce. And Peking duck is served as three traditional courses: crepe-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): gazzpacho or black bean soups; shredded chicken ropa vieja empanadas with cilantro crema; grilled octopus skewers with tapenade; plus fingerling potato-chorizo hash and other seasonal farm-to-table veg dishes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Upper Eastside

Andiamo

5600 Biscayne Blvd. 305-762-5751

With brick-oven pizzerias popping up all over town the past few years, it's difficult to remember the dark days when this part of Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station complex was mainland Miami's sole source of open-flame-cooked pies. But the pizzas still hold up against the newbie pack, especially since exec chef Frank Crupi has upped the ante with unique-to-Miami offerings like a white (tomato-free) New Haven clam pie. Also available: salads, panini, and a tasty meatball appetizer with ricotta. There's a respectable wine and beer list, too. \$\$

Balans Biscayne

6789 Biscayne Blvd., 305-534-9191

It took longer than expected, but this Brit import's third Miami venue finally opened, and rather quietly – which has an upside. It's easier to get a table here (and to park, thanks to the free lot on 68th Street) than at Lincoln Road or Brickell. This, along with the venue's relatively large, open-to-the-street outdoor area, contributes to a more relaxed, neighborhood-focused vibe. The fun menu of global comfort food is the same (ranging from a creamy-centered cheese soufflé through savory Asian potstickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Blue Collar

6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366

Like its predecessor in this space (Michael Bloise's American Noodle Bar), this working-class-themed eatery is helmed

by a former fine-dining chef, Daniel Serfer, a Chef Allen's vet who now crafts casual, creative fare at prices all can afford. Dishes are eclectic. The roughly dozen veggie dishes alone range from curried cauliflower purée to maizeros 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 Ruola pizza (a classic Margherita topped with arugula, prosciutto, and shredded parmesan) doesn't do the trick, the New World Especial (a Latin pie with hearts of palm and boiled eggs) just might. Also available are pastas, salads, sandwiches, dinner entrées (eggplant parmigiana with spaghetti, lomito steak with Argentinean potato salad), and desserts (tiramisu or flan). \$

Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-3433

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese Taylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

East Side Pizza

731 NE 79th St., 305-758-5351

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer entrées like spaghetti and meatballs, but East Side also has pumpkin ravioli in brown butter/sage sauce, wild mushroom ravioli, and other surprisingly upscale choices, including imported Peroni beer. As for the pizza, they are classic pies, available whole or by the slice, made with fresh plum tomato sauce and Grande mozzarella (considered the top American pizza cheese). Best seating for eating is at the sheltered outdoor picnic tables. \$

Florito

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 Cesar Zapata, whose previous restaurant concepts have included Blue Piano (gourmet stoner snacks) and Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea. That is, expect the unexpected. The Fed is an updated tavern featuring creative, from-scratch takes on traditional American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired “pig wings” (pork drumettes with homemade Buffalo sauce, blue cheese mousse, and pickled veggies). Desserts, from third partner Alejandro Ortiz, include sinful sticky buns. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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;

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

and a full range of sides: biscuits and sausage gravy, grits, hash, hash browns, even hot oatmeal. And don't forget traditional hearty entrées like meat loaf, roast turkey, liver and onions, plus burgers, salad platters, and homemade chicken soup. \$\$\$

La Cigale

7281 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-0014

"Bistro" can mean almost anything these days, but with owners who are a husband/wife team recently arrived from Marseille, it's not surprising that this neighborhood wine bistro is the classic kind found in France — a home away from home where the contemporary but cozy space is matched by the southern French comfort food coming from the open kitchen. Drop in for drinks and snacks such as artisan cheeses and charcuterie, or enjoy full meals ranging from classic (wine-poached mussels; a boldly sauced steak/frites) to creative (Parma ham-wrapped tuna loin). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Lo De Lea

7001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-3218

In Casa Toscana's former space, this cute, contemporary parillada is proof that you can have an Argentinean meal and a cholesterol test in the same month. While traditional parillada dishes are tasty, they're meat/fat-heavy, basically heaps of grilled beef. Here the grill is also used for vegetables (an unusually imaginative assortment, including bok choy, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Magnum Lounge

709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make — in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites — organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, not to mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquettes. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamma produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also 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 housemade mozzarella or burrata cheeses — truly milk elevated to royalty — will transport you to heaven. A small market area provides Italian staples, plus superb salumi and the magnificent mozz, to go. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus

1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor Biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming

a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlickwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Siam Rice

7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516

You'll find all the familiar favorite Thai and Japanese items here, and prices for curries and noodle dishes (all customizable regarding choice of protein, preparation, and heat level) are especially good at lunch. But don't overlook somewhat pricier specialties like a deep-fried yet near-greaseless boneless half duck with veggies in red curry sauce. There's also an unusually extensive list of salads, some with inventive fusion touches, like a grilled shrimp/soba salad featuring traditional Thai flavors (sriracha chiles, fish sauce, lime) and Japanese green tea noodles. \$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (deviled eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried focchi pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heftier items like burgers and steak au poivre. And don't miss the sticky date/toffee pudding. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7818

On the menu of sushi-bar specialties plus a small selection of Thai and Japanese cooked dishes, there are a few surprises, such as a unique lobster maki that's admittedly huge in price (\$25.95), but also in size: six ounces of crisp-fried lobster chunks, plus asparagus, avocado, lettuce, tobiko (flying fish), masago (smelt) roes, and special sauces. Thai dishes come with a choice of more than a dozen sauces, ranging from traditional red or green curries to the inventive, such as an unconventional honey sauce. \$\$\$

Sweet Saloon

7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

At this dessert/snack/cocktail bar, from the owner of Moonchine, you'll find live and DJ entertainment, too, from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. — assuming you can find the place, that is. It's above the pan-Asian eatery, up a hidden back staircase. Asian savory snacks include dumplings, edamame, krab rangoons, satays. Desserts range from homey American (NY cheesecake, mini cupcakes) to continental (strawberries melba, housemade Belgian waffles, a shareable chocolate fondue/fruit platter). Actually, some cocktails double as desserts (a Godiva dark chocolate martini) or Asian savories (infusion jars of Stoli and lemongrass). \$\$

Uva's

6900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-9022

Formerly UVA 69, this casual-chic café/lounge, a MiMo neighborhood pioneer, has changed its name and original owners, but remains an all-day-to-late-night hangout. And menu strong points also remain, from fresh-baked pastries and breads to elegant cross-cultural sandwiches (particularly two Latin-inspired upgrades: a classic Cuban with French ham, cornichons, and a baguette; and la minuta, a beer-battered fish fillet on focaccia with cilantro aioli). Whether diners opt for full entrées or make a meal of small plates, the subtle global blending makes fusion make sense. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are homemade right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade 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, shittakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

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

Sabor Latin Restaurant & Cafe

1880 79th St. Cswy., 305-741-2020

This family-run restaurant serves big portions of homey traditional food from several Latin American countries, including Cuba (pan con bistec, ropa vieja), Mexico (nachos, tacos, quesadillas), and Peru (lomo saltado). But the specialty is Colombian classics, from snacks like empanadas to a bandeja paisa combo (grilled steak, chorizo, a gargantuan crispy chicharron strip, fried egg, arepa, plantains, beans, rice). Particularly recommended: daily specials including two meal-in-a-bowl chicken soups, ajiao, and sancocho. If you've wondered about the much-debated difference, here's where to test the taste. \$\$\$

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

NORTH BEACH

Café Prima Pasta

414 71st St., 305-867-0106
Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? Opened in 1993 (with 28 seats), the Cea family's now-sprawling trattoria has added inventive chef Carlos Belon and modern menu items, including focchi rapera (pear/cheese-filled pasta purses with truffled prosciutto cream sauce), an unlikely (soy sauce and parmesan cheese?) but luscious Italian/Japanese fusion tuna carpaccio, and fresh-fruit sorbets. But traditionalists needn't worry. All the old favorites, from the café's famed beef carpaccio to eggplant parm and pastas sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence, are still here and still satisfying. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden

7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879
"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands – none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several house-made sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222
When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author 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 ambiance. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363
Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public – always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambiance is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food – some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$\$

PizzaFiore

9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924
Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crust, oozing-with-goopy-cheese pizzas reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings – sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co.

13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254
When people speak of the West Coast as the USA's quality coffeehouse pioneer territory, they're thinking Seattle – and then south through coastal California. North to Alaska? Not so much. But owner Michael Gesser did indeed open this hip place's parent in Fairbanks back in 1993, after years of traveling through every coffee-growing country in the world. Brews like signature smooth yet exotic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe don't even need cream or sugar, much less frappe frou-frou. All beans are house-roasted. There's solid food, too: brick-oven pizzas, salads, sandwiches, and pastries. \$\$\$

Bagel Bar East

1990 NE 123rd St., 305-895-7022
Crusty outside (even without toasting) and substantially chewy inside, the bagels here are the sort homesick ex-New Yorkers always moan are impossible to find in Miami. For those who prefer puffed-up, 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 Güns & Bagels, one can't

actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bulldog Barbecue/Bulldog Burger

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655
These adjacent restaurants are really one place with two dining areas, since they connect and diners can order from either menu. They also share a BBQ/burger master: Top Chef contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker produces mild-tasting "cue" ranging from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to more unusual items like hot-smoked salmon. As for burgers, many feature unique ingredients such as mayo flavored like red-eye gravy, with strong coffee, or the bun of the infamous Luther: a sweet-glazed mock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut. Costs are comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Cane à Sucre

899 NE 125th St., 305-891-0123
From the Vega brothers (who pioneered the Design and MiMo districts with, respectively, the original Cane à 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-crusteured fresh-baked baguette) are art in their own right. Inventive, substantial salads, sides, daily soups, and homemade sweets (including mouthwateringly buttery croissants) complete the menu. \$\$\$

Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-892-2812
This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellowtail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

Caminito Way

1960 NE 123rd St., 305-893-8322
Open since 1999, this bakery-café is particularly known for its European-influenced homemade Argentine pastries. So come early to pick from the widest variety of savory empanadas (plumply stuffed and admirably delicate – no 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Evio's Pizza & Grill

12600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-899-7699
Family-owned and operated, this indoor/outdoor pizzeria is also family-friendly, right down to the size of its NY-style pies (sold whole or by the slice), which range from large to roughly the diameter of a ferris wheel. And toppings, ranging from meat-lovers to veggie-loaded, are applied with awe-inspiring abundance. Since tastes do vary, the menu also includes a cornucopia of other crowd-pleasers: burgers (including turkey with a unique mustard-spiked cranberry sauce), entrée-size salads, burritos or quesadillas, wings, hot or cold subs and succulent self-basted lamb/beef gyros with tzatziki. \$

Fish Fish

13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124
Here's what makes this elegantly warm restolounge and seafood market not just an irresistible neighborhood draw but a worthwhile drive dining destination: Both local and cold-water fish and shellfish, including stone crab and lobster from owners Melvyn Franks and Rebecca Nachlas's own Florida Keys plant, that are always fresh, never frozen (except some shrimp). For home cooks, the market offers all delivered-daily catches on the menu. But don't miss chef Oscar Quezada's simple and perfect preparations, including lightly battered, crispy tempura shrimp; sophisticated fish and chips (featuring Atlantic cod, not cheap 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

1821 NE 123rd St., 786-866-9007
Festooned with eye-poppingly colored panels and giraffes – subtler but everywhere – this first North American branch of a wildly popular, 30-year-old Brazilian fast/casual chain is the flagship of a



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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 crowd-binder is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, cowl-d. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$\$\$

Il Piccolo Café

2112 NE 123rd St., 305-893-6538

Talk about a neighborhood institution. The owners of this longtime Italian eatery remember frequent visits from Miami native Michelle Bernstein and her parents – when the 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. \$\$\$

Mama Jennie's

11720 NE 2nd Ave. 305-757-3627

For more than 35 years this beloved red-sauce joint has been drawing students and other starvation-budget diners with prodigious portions of lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs (the latter savory yet light-textured), veal marsala topped with a mountain of mushrooms, and other Italian-American belly-busters. All pasta or meat entrées come with oil-drenched garlic rolls and either soup

(hearty minestrone) or a salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, cukes, brined olives, and pickled peppers) that's a dinner in itself. Rustic roadhouse ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$\$\$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissone's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676

From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat 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 proprior 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 savor to Vietnamese pho, the dish contains beef, bean sprouts, and noodles heaped in umami-rich beef broth. Among the nicely priced sushi selections, the Mylo roll (tuna, salmon, crab, avocado, and cuke, topped with tempura fish and eel sauce) is a tasty pick. Don't miss sticky rice with mango for dessert. \$

Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-4313

The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp cook 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. \$

Chef Rolf's Tuna's Seafood Restaurant

17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630

At this longtime North Miami Beach locals' hangout, owner Michael Chiodo and chef Rolf Fellhauer have a few pleasant surprises for diners, beginning with a new name highlighting Fellhauer's long tenure as executive chef at La Paloma. At the restaurant, you'll find a completely renovated dining room and new Yellowfin Lounge. The menu has also been spruced up with old-school spectacle: Several items (including Chateaubriand or rack of lamb for two) are carved or otherwise partially prepared tableside. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779

Proving that national fast-food chains don't have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls "food with integrity." The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn to fillings stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef bar-bacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian ceviches 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. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill

Intracoastal Mall

3969 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124
Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy's, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crusted fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy's different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY

3427 NE 163rd St., 305-949-3318

In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don't worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire's Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you'll be a happy camper, especially if you're an ex-New Yorker. \$\$\$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei

(Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately stuffed 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 spot. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki), and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsha

1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsha curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tiju Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaisa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscence 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 pork-free pig heaven. Owner Julio Valderrama's healthy global (though mostly Mediterranean, Mexican, and New American) menu of not-so-small plates, salads, sandwiches/wraps, and organic grain-based platters is so immense you could literally eat for months without repeating – or indulging in poultry and fish dishes. Cooking isn't cutting-edge, but unusual spicing keeps things interesting. Especially recommended: a signature veg-and-feta-packed za'atar flatbread; also slightly sinful sweet potato with butter and cinnamon. \$\$\$

Kebab Indian Restaurant

514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$\$

Kings County Pizza

18228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino's flopsy-crusted, 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, kone fillings range from breakfast items like huevos rancheros to Thai chicken, chicken curry, coconut shrimp, konos kon lechon (slow-roasted pork with mojo), various pizzas, BBQ, chicken Florentine, healthy

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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 fagirole, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$-\$\$

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 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 surface-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$-\$\$\$

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like abondigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sang's Chinese Restaurant

1925 NE 163rd St., 305-947-7076

Sang's has three menus. The pink menu is Americanized Chinese food, from chop suey to honey garlic chicken. The white menu permits the chef to show off his authentic Chinese fare: salt and pepper prawns, rich beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even esoterica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, 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 most-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. \$-\$\$

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 steak-house 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 seccchi: sopressata salami, zesty tomato sauce, provolone, goat cheese, and fresh fior di latte mozzarella. \$\$\$

Sushi House

15700 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

16885 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. \$\$

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 tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

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

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 chef why Beirut was called the Paris of the East. You'll find familiar Middle Eastern favorites, but many have refinements that lift them above average: pita that's housemade, charmingly fluffy when warm from the oven; falafel incorporating flavorful fava beans with the usual ground chickpeas. Especially appealing are more uncommon items like crisp-fried cauliflower with tahini, feteh (a chickpea casserole "iced" with thick yogurt), and buttery cheese/herb-filled sambusak pastries. Finish exotically with a hookah. \$\$-\$\$\$

Open Kitchen

1071 95th St., 305-865-0090

If we were on Death Row, choosing a last meal, this very chef-centered lunchroom/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and pimientos. This classic (whose carb components make it satisfying without à la carte sides, and hence a relative bargain) isn't on the menu anymore, but cooks will prepare it on request. \$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

17901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-2625

When people rave about New York pizzas' superiority, they don't just mean thin crusts. They mean the kind of airy, abundantly bubbled, uniquely flavorful crusts that can only be consistently produced by a traditional coal (not wood) oven – like those at Anthony's, which began with one Fort Lauderdale pizzeria in 2002 and now has roughly 30 locations. Quality toppings, though limited, hit all the major food groups, from prosciutto to kalamata olives. There are salads, too, but the sausage and garlic-sautéed broccoli rabe pie is a tastier green vegetable. \$\$

Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd. 305-935-4029

One word: flugels. 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 flugels 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. \$\$

Bourbon Steak

19999 W. Country Club Dr. 786-279-0658
(Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)

At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$

BurgerFi

18139 Biscayne Blvd., 305-466-0350

It's not surprising that this Florida-based "better burger" franchise is one of America's fastest-growing. With décor that's relaxingly retro yet futuristically earth-friendly (think recycled Coke bottle chairs), beverages ranging from milkshakes to craft beers, and sourced hormone/antibiotic-free, grass-fed Angus burgers on branded buns, for prices rivaling those for fast-food junkburgers, what's not to love? There are also vegetarian quinoa burgers or Kobe dogs, plus "accessories" including hand-cut fries, killer crisp-battered onion rings, freshly made, all-natural frozen custard, and toppings galore. \$

Cadillac Ranch

Village at Gulfstream Park
921 Silks Run Rd. #1615, 954-456-1031

It's hard to decide if the most fun interpretation of beef here is the weekend prime rib dinner special (with two sides and a meat hunk hefty enough for sandwiches the next day) or the mechanical bull. Party like it's 1980 at this all-American restorlounge/sports bar, which includes two outdoor patios with fire pits and, sometimes, live rootsy music. If you miss out on the roast beef (it

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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-crusted designer pizza. To kind, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

Fuji Hana
2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080
A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians – for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield – might want to add the place to their “worth a special drive” list, thanks to chefs’ winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kampai
18855 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410
At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricey but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic “Thai hot”). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La 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 gloppily sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: “With crispy adorable fringy outfit.” \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Pilar
20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777
Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam
19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955
(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Alba
16850 Collins Ave., 786-923-9305
From bad-boy celeb chef Ralph Pagano, Sole resort's seaside Italian/Italian-American eatery has an irreverent retro Rat Pack vibe and a menu featuring “naked ravioli” from the Gnudi Bar, fresh seafood, homemade pastas, classic and contemporary pizzas, and old school “red sauce joint” entrées, some upscale. (When lobster Française is available, why settle for chicken?) Almond-sage butter-sauced butternut squash gnudi is a best bet. And meals end with another best bet: the “Viny D Split,” a game enabling tables to win their meals for free. \$\$\$

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 crepes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crusted egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Copper Chimney
18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075
At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation – plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bhajani 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 than Jewish deli, includes daily specials ranging from spa-grilled chicken to homemade Italian sausage and peppers. But it's worth seeking out items that made South Beach's original Epicure famous: sandwiches featuring housemade rare roast beef; shrimp or chunky smoked whitefish salads; fresh baked goods. \$\$\$

The H Restaurant
17608 Collins Ave., 305-931-9106
This friendly, family-owned bistro is the sort of homeaway-from-home found every few blocks in France – here Gerard and Karin Herrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/raspberry sauce, fish with an impeccable lemon beurre blanc, and a satisfying steak/frites (with peppery cognac cream sauce). We'd leave the American stuff to the kids. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Il Mulino New York
17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191
If too much is not enough for you, this majority upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food – fried zucchini coins, salami, bruschetta with varying toppings, a wedge of quality parmigiano, garlic bread – that ordering off the menu seems superfluous. But mushroom raviolis in truffle cream sauce are irresistible, and perfectly tenderized veal patesan, the size of a large pizza, makes a great take-out dinner... for the next week. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kitchen 305
16701 Collins Ave., 305-749-2110
Offering eclectic American fare, this resort restaurant room, despite its contemporary open kitchen, has the retro-glam look of a renovated discotheque – which is what it was. In fact, it's still as much lounge as eatery, so it's best to arrive early if you want a relatively DJ-free eating experience. A seductive mango-papaya BBQ sauce makes ribs a tasty choice any night, but most local diners in the know come on nights when the restaurant features irresistibly priced seasonal seafood specials (all-you-can-eat stone crabs one night, lobster on another). A spacious dining counter overlooking the cooks makes the Kitchen a comfortable spot for singles. \$\$\$

Piazzetta
17875 Collins Ave., 305-918-6816
You can't help feeling optimistic about a tourist town's food scene when its resort restaurants, which generally walk the middle of the road, get creative. And it doesn't get much more creative than this stylish restaurant and Italian market, which bills itself as a trip to an Italian-inspired “little market square,” but which, along with artisanal salumi plus pizzas and pastas, serves sushi. Particularly tasty: the native Neapolitan pizza chef's truffled taleggio and mushroom pies; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

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

Sumo Sushi Bar & Grill
17630 Collins Ave., 305-682-1243
Sushi may well have been served in Sunny Isles before this longtime neighborhood favorite opened, but Sumo was the neighborhood's first sushi bar to double as a popular lounge/hangout as well as restaurant. Ladies' nights are legend. While Thai and Chinese dishes are available, as well as purist nigiri, few can resist the truly sumo-wrestler-size maki rolls, the more over-the-top, the better. Our bet for biggest crowd pleaser: the spicy Pink Lady (shrimp tempura, avocado, 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 fans. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannellini bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese “white” pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill
350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2010
It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find trout dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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Join Ducati at the Wynwood Gateway Building with two, brand-new modern retail spaces available for lease and for short-term rentals in the middle of all Art Basel action. Also available is an adjacent land parcel overlooking NW 28 ST totaling 13,850 SF that may be rented for events.



**WYNWOOD: 166 NW 29 ST | BOUTIQUE RETAIL SPACE
FRONT SPACE IS APPROXIMATELY 700 SF**

This property comes with parking and potential access to the vacant lots behind the building.



**WYNWOOD: 2103 NW 2 AVE | GALLERY / RETAIL SPACE
6200 SF BLDG. + TWO VACANT LOTS: 8,280 SF LOT+ 10K SF LOT**

Prime lot located on NW 2 AVE in the middle of all Art Basel action. The lot may be rented for multiple uses including private & public events as well as parking.



**WYNWOOD / MIDTOWN: 3600 N MIAMI AVE
6,001 SF**

Corner retail building may be available for exposition or gallery uses.



**WYNWOOD: 299 NW 36 ST | 5,000 SF
2 STORY LIVE/WORK WAREHOUSE.**

Features a full Kitchen, saloon style wrap around mezzanine and a charming urban garden. This property is fully A/C'd and features 20' clear ceiling heights. Parking on the side + plenty of Street Parking.



**WYNWOOD: 120 NE 27 ST
+/-5,000 SF**

Creative office space inside of an adaptively reused warehouse now serving as an office building in the heart of Wynwood.

ADDITIONAL ART BASEL SPACES AVAILABLE! CONTACT US TODAY!

For more information contact:
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