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Times

August 2018

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Volume 16 Issue 6



City in Chaos

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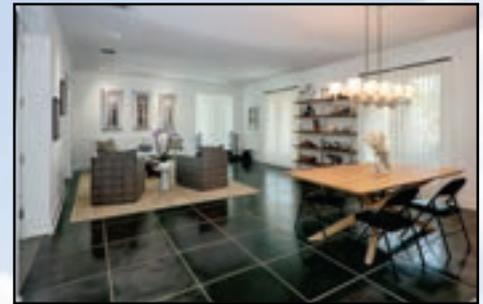
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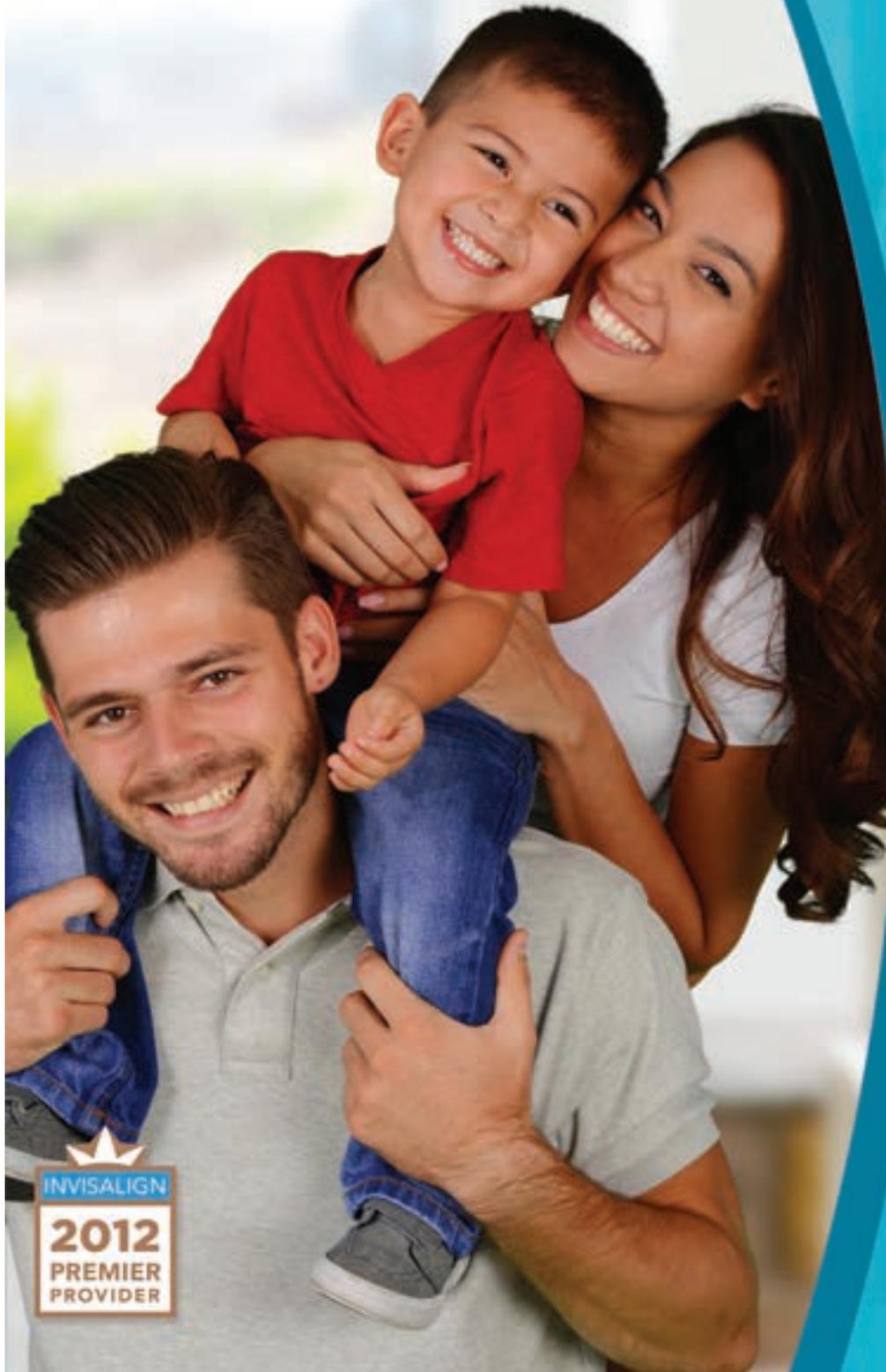
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Commentary: LETTERS

Who's "Openly Campaigning" Now?

Regarding Erik Bojnansky's "Political Primacy" (July 2018), I wonder if Donna Shalala understands there are not enough white suburban voters to help her defeat her possible opponent.

I also wonder if she really thinks working with the NRA will help her win the young voters who are still struggling with the Orlando Pulse nightclub and Parkland school mass shootings. Also does she really think that young voters will support a candidate who is fine with murdering innocent animals in cold blood?

Maria Elvira Salazar is not just a "Hispanic" TV presenter; she is a super-charismatic Harvard-graduated TV journalist. Not to mention, she perfectly communicates in both languages — English and Spanish — and during her entire career has strongly supported the local Latino LGBTQ community.

Surprisingly enough, her political agenda sounds more progressive than the Democratic candidate *Biscayne Times* is openly campaigning for in its cover story. The only issue against her? She is running as a Republican.

Quién es Bill Nelson?

I guess you can't teach new tricks to an old dog.

*Jorge Sanchez,
registered independent
Palm Grove*

more famous for tourism than the arts. What would be cooler yet is to combine it with this idea: a giant wave pool for surfing, an idea that has been "floating" around since 2007. Here's a link to the idea: <http://bit.ly/2KUBNav>.

With that component, it addresses the City of Miami's desire to lease the FEC boat slip for marine purposes as "a means of raising revenue" for the city.

*DC Copeland
Miami Shores*

The Brazen Cadre at the End of the Road

I read with interest, frustration, and disappointment Mark Sell's article on reopening the east end of NE 135th Street ("Face-off: North Miami vs. FIU," July 2018). It does the public a disservice to portray a small group of self-serving residents as heroic rebels fighting The System. Rather, we have a tiny minority of the North Miami citizenry effectively holding everyone else hostage in a very dangerous game.

Some years ago, this brazen cadre threw down some dirt, mulch, and plants on top of an existing, functional road looping into NE 151st Street. They thus created a spiffy little cul-de-sac that would boost property values on this drab strip of aging apartments/condos and commercial operations. They topped off this act of blatant misappropriation by calling the end of the street a "nature preserve."



Add Actual Waves to Miami Wave

The Miami Wave has its merits, despite the dismissive tone of Erik Bojnansky's description of it ("From Land Swaps to High-Rise Wheels," July 2018).

The London Eye is a major tourist attraction. Before it was built overlooking the Thames, many thought it wasn't a fit aesthetically with that ancient city.

This one planned for Miami is much more ingenious and a better fit for a city

This went on quietly until 151st Street suddenly sprouted, in addition to FIU, an elementary school, a high school, and a charter school. Currently there is no egress from 151st Street for thousands of students, parents, faculty, and staff who have to U-turn their way back out. Countless children take their lives in their hands every day, navigating the

Continued on page 14



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1024 Ocean Dr #A207 \$225,000

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463 NE 55 Ter. \$929,000

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787 NE 87 St. \$635,000

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JUST SOLD!

410 NE 53 St. \$520,000

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3265 NW 100 St. \$249,000

Great starter home on a nice sized lot! This 3BR/1BA home features original hardwood floors, large kitchen, formal dining & laundry room.



11113 NE 10 Ave. \$425,000

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JUST SOLD!

1750 N Bayshore Dr. #3914 \$360,000

Spacious 2BR/2BA unit w/ water & city views of Biscayne Bay and Miami skyline. This unit features many updates such as marble floors.



JUST SOLD!

1000 NE 72 Ter. \$949,900

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736 NE 74 St. \$555,000

Dripping in charm, this adorable Belle Meade cottage is over 1,600 sf plus a garage and 3 bonus rooms. This 2/2 has 3 family rooms!



1800 NE 114 St. #2001 \$329,000

Beautiful bayview from this 1,950 sf 2BD, 3 full bathrooms condo on the 20th floor. Large remodeled kitchen with new wood cabinets &



461 NE 53 St. \$749,000

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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 12

sidewalk-less, clogged road. The street is a major accident waiting to happen. Meanwhile, the 135th Street crusaders airily wave off efforts to reopen the only reasonable roadway to serve the area.

It is true that FIU has mishandled the PR on the street opening, but this is just what FIU does under its current leadership. From insulting the 135th Street gang to bungling a realistic opportunity to negotiate for access to the pathetically underused Youth Fair grounds to erecting what was supposed to be a simple pedestrian bridge that morphed into a murderous eyesore tragically overloaded with hubris, FIU has at every turn bullied, rather than partnered with, the community. This is indeed regrettable.

Nonetheless, FIU's missteps do not change the obvious and incontrovertible need to reopen the little street with mammoth pretensions. It is tempting to rush to support something that purports to preserve nature; then we hear this selfish little coterie arguing strenuously that the best alternative is to build a new road through existing wetlands. So much for environmental consciousness.

It is tiresome that North Miami Councilman Scott Galvin and his troops have managed, for years now, to risk lives, disrupt schooling, and limit economic expansion by pirating a public road for their own selfish purposes.

*Lesley Northup
Miami Shores*

In This New Age of Information Sharing, Not a BT Fan

I started reading your monthly news magazine hoping to find nothing but unbiased truth. Instead, to my utter lack of surprise, I find another raging "contributor" by the name of Jack King, who writes an obtrusively liberal and dishonest story ("Big Ego, No Brains," July 2018) in which he compares a lackluster president to the catastrophe and abuse of human life that was the Holocaust.

How did the editor ever approve this "commentary"? Doing this only decreases the value of the lives lost during that time of chaos and strife.

I have given up on trying to find a rational reason as to why you would publish this story unless you wanted to influence those who only read your paper and sway election votes. That is not only malignant in nature, but an insult to real

reporters of news.

Checking the actual content (I shouldn't have, there was nothing there but ad hominem and claims that lay unsupported), I find myself unable to trust you as credible, much like the *New York Times*, Vox, and dare I say it? BuzzFeed. Next time you try to vilify someone for committing "atrocities," first look to how this happened and when it happened.

Obama had much higher numbers of people being ripped from their family, yet now all of a sudden you care? It also takes a while to annul the terrible law that (Clinton, what a surprise) put in place that made this happen.

In the end, I don't intend to continue on this tirade of calling out your bias like a sore thumb, but know this: Manipulating information in a new age of information sharing will not be so easy.

*Michael Rosen
Aventura*

Disgusting, Disrespectful, and Ignorant

I have read a lot of articles about our president with which I have not agreed. However, Jack King's "Big Ego, No Brains" has, for the first time, compelled me to comment.

This commentary is the most disgusting, disrespectful, ignorant piece of trash that has ever been left on my doorstep. It should be retracted, and *Biscayne Times* should apologize to your readers for your blatant disrespect of our POTUS.

*Disgraceful.
Rachel Weiss
Keystone Point*

Brightline Gets a Rave

I'm happy to see that Brightline has finally started on the Florida East Coast railroad tracks ("A Hundred Trains a Day," June 2018). It's a nice, smooth ride. Passenger service should never have stopped on the FEC railroad.

I would like to have service to Orlando as soon as possible; however, it will take another three years. The Tri-Rail coastal link will be a good addition, with more stations.

Amtrak belongs on the FEC to Jacksonville. It now goes to the heavily populated tourist cities of Okeechobee, Lake Placid, and Sebring, and it takes ten hours to get to Jacksonville. Too bad Amtrak is not on the FEC tracks. Maybe someday. Meanwhile, we wait.

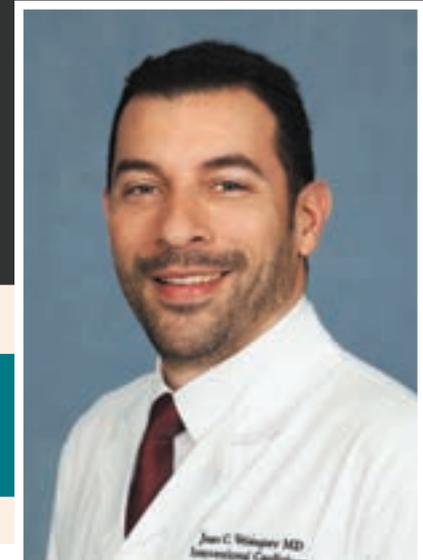
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Biscayne Park*

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Commission Punts on Land Grab

Soccer stadium goes to voters in November

By Jack King
BT Contributor

Ah, yes, as we get closer to the August break in all things political, stuff begins to happen at warp speed. At the city commission level, votes are taken with little or no discussion, and our commissioners head for the doors like scalded dogs.

The bad thing is, they vote badly. The good thing? They won't be able to vote again on anything until the first week in September. And that's all right. They've already done enough damage for the year. And maybe longer.

For those of you living under a rock, the Miami City Commission voted to put the proposed new soccer stadium, planned to be built on top of the publicly owned Melreese golf course, along with tons of retail, office, and hotel space, on the fall ballot.

The issue goes to the voters November 6. And that brings up another question. Why'd the city commission refer this issue to us? Didn't we elect them to run the city for us? Is this a duck-and-cover move to protect their political rear ends?

And why did we elect you guys, especially Commissioner Ken Russell, if you just pass the ball back to us and then go on vacation? What good are you? Why do we the people even need you?

The leader of the commissioners in favor of the stadium/retail mall is none other than Commissioner Joe Carollo.

Joe never ducks for cover. He just asks the developers for a bigger check, right, Joe? Hey, Joe, did the check clear? I'm sure it did because the Beckham/Mas group has plenty of money, and they know how to spread it around.

Miami has a miserable history with its sports franchises and the facilities they play in, possibly with the exception of the Miami Dolphins, who played in the Orange Bowl for 22 years. When Joe Robbie bought the team, he wanted a new stadium and couldn't come to terms with the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County, so he did what any self-respecting millionaire would do. He built his own stadium on his own land. That was the last time in the history of Miami that happened. Nor will it happen again any time soon, as long as the sucker politicians with our money will build facilities for them. And it hasn't happened.

The Miami Heat's first home was built considerably smaller than most arenas in the NBA, primarily because the owners didn't want lots of empty seats showing on television. However, when the Heat started winning, they wanted a new arena, much larger and — get this — right on Biscayne Bay and on public land. They got it all, thanks to mindless politicians playing with our money, who would do anything the owners of the Heat wanted.

And then along comes baseball. Remember the pitch that we got from the Marlins' owners? Baseball will be



Inside Beckham's stadium: Let there be soccer, but don't make us pay it.

popular here because of the large number of Cubans! "They love beisbol!" And once again, we got suckered by the politicians who saw a way to make money.

They decided we didn't need the Orange Bowl stadium anymore, so the city tore it down and built a baseball stadium on the site for the Marlins, who'd been playing at Joe Robbie Stadium — and just *had* to have their own ballpark.

The Marlins won a couple of World Series championships and then sold all the star players who'd actually won the series. After that fiasco, the Marlins were so bad, nobody came to the games. The owners didn't care. They were making money, and that's what it's all about.

The last time I to the Marlins' stadium it wasn't to watch a ballgame. There is a brew pub there, but not in the stadium. It's in one of the parking garages, and I think there were more people in the brew pub than at the stadium. Oh

yeah, the parking garage was pretty much empty.

And the really bad thing is that while the financing for the Marlins' stadium spreads out over 40 years, it is back-loaded, meaning most of the money is to be paid back in the last few years of the deal. Total cost after all the bonds have been paid off: \$2.5 billion.

Tell your kids to leave town by 2035. It won't be pretty. But then again, this is Miami. We, or our kids, will find a way.

As I sit here, hoping Miami will figure out how to land an MLS soccer team without making us poor people pay for it, I'm looking at a piece in the *Miami Herald*, written by Michelle Kaufman. It extols the virtues of soccer, especially professional soccer.

Soccer in itself is one of the greatest sports — one ball and a field. But if you want my vote, support soccer at the kids' level.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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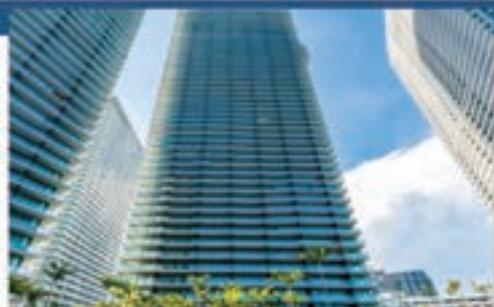
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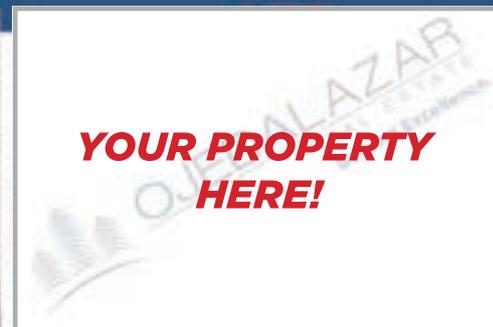
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Stacked Decks

Transit solutions must include parking proposals

By **Larry Gautier**
Special to the *BT*

I am a big fan and advocate for better transportation solutions. Especially since I've been sitting in traffic, like the rest of you, for many years. I think it's a goal that we should continue to strive for. Being a native Miamian and a 30-year commercial real estate professional, I too have seen area traffic get worse and worse over the years.

There is another area of efficiency that is rarely talked about, but which I think has to be part of the overall transportation solution — and that is parking. There are creative parking systems that now exist and that should be reviewed, explored, and considered.

We always talk about the drive time that it takes to get from one point to another. But we never talk about the time and frustration we go through when we get to our destination and then can't find a parking space. Now, granted, this can be more of an area- and site-specific issue, but nonetheless, the lack of parking can be a major inconvenience and problem.

For example, have you ever struggled to find a parking space in Miami Beach or Brickell? How many times did you drive around the block hoping to find a spot? How much time did it take until you did? And then, when you found a parking space, how much did you have to pay?

Let's take it one step further. Have you ever been to a shopping center, office building, or apartment building and couldn't find a parking space? Yep, we have all been there.

It seems that the only solutions I hear about are building more large high-rise concrete parking garages that can take years to plan, get approved, and build — and which, by the way, are very expensive.

On the other side of the equation are local residents who don't want these structures in their backyards because — you guessed it — they cause even more traffic congestion. On top of that, the proposals for better transit, new local zoning codes, and more ride-sharing models are all designed to *reduce* the number of cars that are on the road.

It seems to me that we need some new thinking around parking solutions that can be implemented immediately and complement the efforts of the transportation-efficiency conversation.

As a bonus, what if that parking solution had the flexibility to be modified and even downsized as needed in the future?

I've been looking for several years for a specialized parking system, and I think I have finally found it.

Mechanical parking hasn't yet taken off as a viable concept in South Florida. That is very strange, since this type of parking is standard operating procedure in cities and countries elsewhere around the world.



Miami-Dade County, especially, has one of this nation's most diverse international populations, so you'd think that implementation of this parking solution would be a no-brainer, especially since the end user or customer is likely already acquainted with the system. In addition, mechanical parking is widely used in cities like New York and Chicago, and has been for many years, very successfully.

As most of you probably are, I was very skeptical of anything new in the parking area. However, during my research, I have found this type of parking technology to be very efficient, safe, and secure. There are several companies that are working on implementing the first system in Miami-Dade County. Of those, the international companies seem to have really developed a top-notch mechanical parking product. These systems can be customized to fit a specific site.

Technology can be incorporated to reduce the wait time to less than if you parked in a garage; plus they generally cost one-third of the cost of a typical concrete garage and can also be up and running in one-third of the time, as well.

The parking structure can be designed to blend into the environment with creative exterior decorations.

These are just a few of the immediate benefits. Safe, secure, reliable, and sustainable — check those boxes, too.

Education and communication at this point are key to implementing mechanical parking solutions. Numerous presentations to end users in both the public and private sectors have been made, and the first projects are ready to get built.

Each is a customized parking solution. Some are for individual owners, some turn parking lots into greenspace and solutions that support area development. Each request is unique in its own way. That is the beauty of the system — its flexibility and its ability to meet the needs of *all* stakeholders.

Our car may get us there, but “parking drives everything!”

Larry Gautier is a senior vice president at NAI Miami, a commercial real estate brokerage firm. His area of expertise is special projects and project management.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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BizBuzz

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

By **Margaret Griffis**
BT Contributor

Everyone was talking about the blood moon recently, but last month's lunar eclipse happened on the other side of the world. Closer to home, the new moon on August 11 means this year's Perseid meteor shower could be memorable, with plenty of shooting stars visible even in South Florida.

A different type of star will be appearing at the **Miami Home Design and Remodeling Show** (305-667-9299, www.homeshows.net) when it returns to town August 31 through September 3 at the Mana Wynwood Convention Center (318 NW 23rd St.). If you've been to one, you already know that you'll see the latest trends in home design, talk to professionals about your next project, and get sage advice at the celebrity panels and showcases. TV star John Gidding from TLC's *Trading Spaces* and HGTV's *Curb Appeal* will appear on Sunday, September 2, and on Labor Day, September 3, at 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. to discuss the role of art in your home. Tickets are \$10, but if you purchase online by August 30, you'll only pay \$7.

Sure, you can go see great exhibits for *free* at the **Institute of**



Contemporary Art, Miami (61 NE 41st St., 305-901-5272) and enjoy the art of Sondra Perry, Louise Bourgeois, or Terry Adkins. However, membership has its privileges, and you can privilege yourself up this month for 30 percent off on the ICA's most popular membership level. With an ICA Next membership, you'll gain exclusive access to Next Level events, select art fairs during Miami Art Week, VIP cocktail receptions, the annual summer poolside soiree at Soho Beach House, and reciprocal membership at nearly 700 institutions in North America. Visit www.icamiami.org/support/ica-next-summer-2018 to sign up. It's \$250 until the end of the month.

Bayside Marketplace (401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-577-3344) is calling on rising stars to join the waterfront mall's second annual "Sounds of Bayside" event September 26 at 4:00 p.m. It's a competition for local musicians and spoken word

artists wanting exposure, recognition, and a chance to get future gigs at the Bayside. A panel of locally and nationally recognized celebrities and industry professionals will serve as judges. Send your audition samples to SoundsOfBayside@gmail.com for consideration.

Everyone expects a relaxing massage to be great for relieving stress, but have you ever tried massage for a medical issue, such as pain, hypertension, or pregnancy? New advertiser **Meridian Spa and Therapy Massage** has a stable of therapists knowledgeable in meridian, Swedish, deep-tissue, and other types of massage and acupressure, which can help with a variety of disorders and problems. Consider getting a facial, too, while you're there. Brighten up your face with a deep cleansing, acne treatment, or collagen treatment. Feel great and look great for your weekend.

You'll likely need all that induced relaxation to gird yourself for the new

school year if you've got a kid or two hanging around the house.

At **Allison Academy** (1881 NE 164th St., 305-940-3922) school starts August 16. In operation since 1983, the school lives up to its goal "to promote moral, intellectual, physical, and academic excellence so that each student may rise to honorable achievements, and contribute to the common good." Excellence doesn't mean boring, though. Students can enjoy stimulating electives that include robotics, coding, introduction to law, guitar, rock/jazz band, art, hands-on science, and an entrepreneurial program.

Classes begin at **Cushman School** (592 NE 60th St., 305-757-1966) on August 31 for PK3 through eighth grade. The high school (4700 Biscayne Blvd.) opens its doors three days earlier, on August 27. Are you interested in enrolling your child in a rigorous curriculum

Continued on page 22



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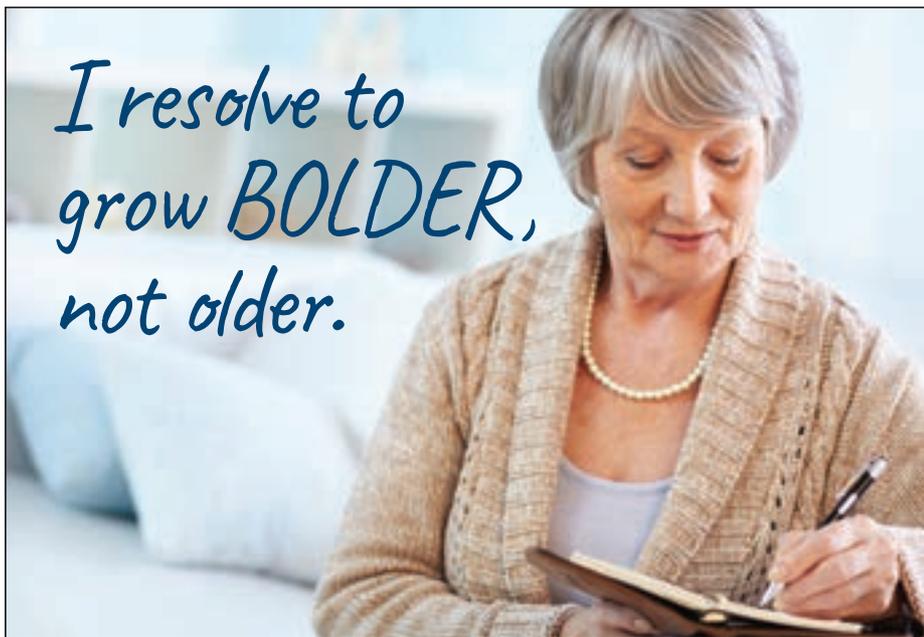
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*Nationwide Survey: Health Care Costs Are a Top Retirement Worry, But Few Have A Plan on How to Pay Them

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BizBuzz

Continued from page 20

that's enriched with character-building experiences? For example, the Society & Me Challenge Seminar (SAM) is a required course for all high-schoolers at Cushman. Students identify and analyze the major issues of our time, choose one they wish to tackle, and deliver solutions that positively impact the society at large. Sound good? The high school is holding two open houses (October 18 and November 8) so prospective students and their parents can get acquainted with this venerable institution. Call to reserve a spot.

Monsignor Edward Pace High School (15600 NW 32nd Ave., 305-623-PACE) has been preparing for the new school year by renovating the chapel, STEM lab, and some bathrooms, while adding a new walkway bridge and elevator. The school is also accepting new student applications. Call soon to start the process, as the first day of school is August 20, and orientation day for new students is August 17.

Some parents already hear that their child "hates" math. Some will only find out in a couple months, when test grades begin to arrive. In either case, new advertiser **I Hate Math!** (1673 NE 123rd St., North Miami, 305-397-6429) can help you and your child. This tutoring service will make math concepts so easy to understand that your kid may learn to love math, not hate it. There's also instruction for specific tests, such as the SAT, GED, or CLEP. Call for a free consultation.

Even if you still have kids in school, you should be planning for your retirement, as well as their college bills. Yes, it's scary to think about the potential health-care costs in your silver years, but ignoring the problem won't make it go away. Call **Treece Financial Group** (9999 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 203, Miami Shores, 305-751-8855) to schedule a free consultation or to attend a free seminar at Brockway Memorial Library (10021 NE 2nd Ave., Miami Shores) at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 7. The lecture will cover strategies to remain independent, comfortable, and secure in your own home as you age. Seating is limited, so RSVP to reserve your spot.

With the new school year coming up quickly, isn't it time to take the kids to get a fabulous new look? Make an appointment with Hannah Lansky at

Hannah & Her Scissors (611 NE 86th St., 305-772-8426) for cuts, styling, coloring, and highlights that will wow their classmates. While there, have them check out Hannah's art gallery for creative inspiration; school isn't just about math and language courses, you know.

August is also the perfect time to schedule an appointment at the **Florida Center for Allergy and Asthma Care** (1-877-4-ALLERGY) to ensure your child is prepared to *not* sniffle and hack through another school year. With 17 convenient locations, you can easily address allergy and asthma concerns with a board-certified doctor, and learn about new medications and treatments that can help your child not only be more comfortable but survive a bad attack.

August is also National Immunization Awareness Month. No matter your age, there's probably a vaccine you could benefit from. Call 305-674-CARE to schedule a next-day visit with a health professional at **Mount Sinai Medical Center** to get the necessary shots for enrolling in school or just for having a healthy year.

It can be daunting to try to follow diet and exercise regimens without a teacher, so sign up for the next seminar at **North Shore Medical Center** (1100 NW 95th St., 855-767-8772). Dr. Juan Velasquez is an expert in interventional cardiology and will help you learn how to prevent heart disease at any age and risk level. The free lecture will be held Wednesday, August 22, at noon. Reservations are required, and refreshments will be served.

Jackson Health Systems (160 NW 170th St., North Miami Beach, 305-585-TRIM) is also holding a free seminar that will address your questions about the hospital's holistic weight-loss program. This one's Thursday, August 9, at 6:30 p.m. Not only will you learn about surgical options, you'll find that the program takes your individual needs and problems into consideration. Sometimes dieting and exercise just isn't enough. Don't give up. Get help.

Sahara dust and a cooler Atlantic Ocean may have moderated this year's hurricane season, but a tropical storm can still form close by at any time. **Always Classic Care** (1380 NE Miami Gardens Dr., Suite 235, 305-403-2622) offers hurricane preparedness for the elderly, among other services, such as medication management, transportation services, shopping, meal preparation,

continence care, Alzheimer's planning, and more. Call for a consultation about your specific needs.

While we're talking about storm prep, let's keep in mind that South Florida often gets big hurricanes late in the season. Wilma appeared out of the Caribbean at the end of October, remember? Call **Ocean Impact Windows and Doors** (675 NW 116th St., 305-640-5288) now to ensure that you'll have new impact windows and doors should the inevitable happen this year. With their 45 years of hands-on experience, you can rest assured that the work will protect you and your property.

If you prefer to prepare on your own, consult with staff at returning advertiser **Joe Blair Garden Supply** (320 NE 79th St., 305-757-5554) to stock up on generators, tools, and other materials you'll need should a storm decide to trim trees in Miami-Dade again. Can't afford new? Come in to inspect the pre-owned equipment or to repair any of the old and trusty tools you've relied on for years. And it's okay to glance at the new mowers while you're there.

Here's a deal for edible hurricane supplies. **Milam's Markets** (17100 Collins Ave., Sunny Isles Beach, 305-945-1890, and four other locations) is offering *BT* readers free grocery delivery this month! Use code "Milamsfree," order \$35 worth of goods online, and you won't have to fight traffic to get your summer fruits and veggies, local seafood, tasty treats, and specialty products.

With all that hard work preparing for the worst, how about rewarding yourself with the best? In 1997, **Nothing Bundt Cakes** (15400 Biscayne Blvd., Suite #112, 305-974-4536) founders Dena Tripp and Debbie Shwetz joined kitchens to bring family and friends a taste of cake perfection, using all-natural ingredients: real eggs, butter, and cream cheese. They also realized that the general public needed access to this goodness, and Nothing Bundt Cakes was born. And yes, it *is* nothing but bundt cakes in various delicious flavors and several appealing sizes. For its first appearance in the *BT*, the bakery is offering readers a BOGO special. Buy one bundtlet and get one free during August, if you mention *Biscayne Times*.

Want another BOGO special? Buy one lunch and get one free this month at **Sandwich Where?** (36 NE 54th St., 786-502-4696) by using the coupon available in this issue. Lunch is only \$5.99 and

varies daily, but you can expect half a hoogie, chips, and a drink...times two!

Wednesdays can be such a drag, but *BT* readers stopping for dinner at **Moon Thai Organic Kitchen** (3455 NE 163rd St., North Miami Beach, 305-974-5129) can live up midweek with two complimentary glasses of wine with dinner. Just mention *Biscayne Times* when ordering. What a treat when paired with the restaurant's exciting pan-Asian offerings.

If you've been sitting on your bottom watching the World Cup, Wimbledon, Tour de France, or any other televised sporting event, instead of going outside this summer to engage in sports yourself, you may find you've added a few beers and nachos to your waistline. It's not too late to get back to ship shape by the end of summer. Visit **Wike-up! Aquabikes** (1776 Sans Souci Blvd., North Miami, 786-288-0722), and check out their fitness bikes that fit perfectly within the coolness of your own pool. Shopping online? Use coupon code 15PERFS544 at www.wike-up.com to get 15% off and free shipping anywhere in U.S. Or take advantage of the \$99/month financing plan.

This is going to sound like absolute *crazytalk*, but dental procedures don't have to hurt. Seriously! Say hello to returning advertiser **Biscayne Dental Center and Spa**, which offers sedation dentistry at its new state-of-the-art facility. If you're difficult to numb or just get queasy when a dental mirror approaches your pearlies, consider being knocked out completely at appointment time. The center can treat any of your dental issues from simple checkups and braces to oral surgery and cosmetic enhancements, and more. Call today for new-patient deals.

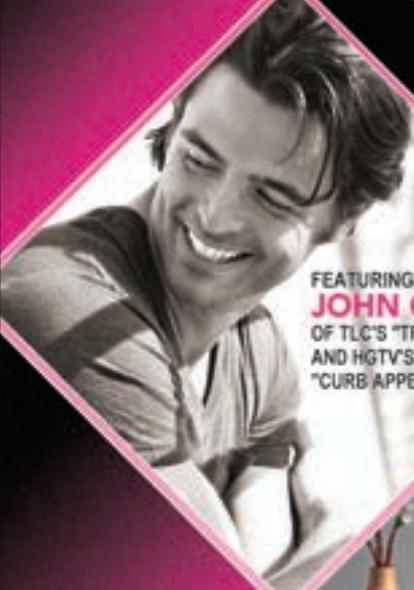
Did you know that the **Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department** will hand you a check for up to \$200 if you switch out your old bathroom fixtures for new high-efficiency toilets, faucets, and showerheads? Not only do new fixtures make your bathroom look better, they can also reduce your water bill. Sounds like a win-win situation. Visit www.miamidade.gov/BetterBathroom for rebate forms and details.

Voting is important. And so is being informed. Visit www.iamelectionready.org or call 311 to find out about your election dates, receive a sample ballot, or request an absentee ballot — all thanks to the folks at Miami-Dade Elections. And be sure to read the ads in *Biscayne Times*.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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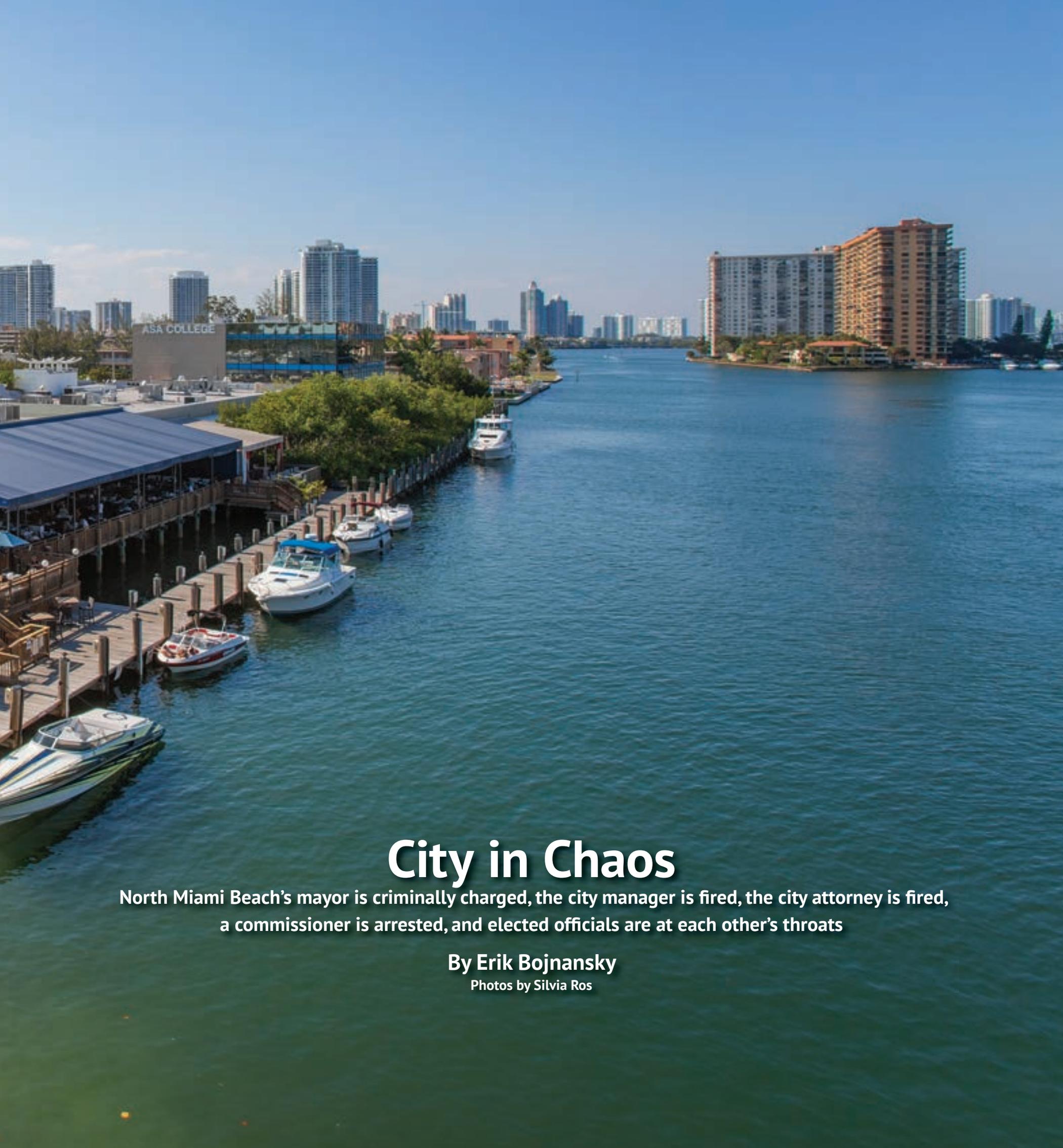
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City in Chaos

North Miami Beach's mayor is criminally charged, the city manager is fired, the city attorney is fired, a commissioner is arrested, and elected officials are at each other's throats

By Erik Bojnansky

Photos by Silvia Ros

On his Facebook page, George Vallejo introduces himself this way: “Former Mayor of North Miami Beach who delivered progress and good government to NMB.” On Twitter he uses the same “Former Mayor of North Miami Beach” handle.

Vallejo’s website, GeorgeVallejo.com, proclaims, “Official Site of Former Mayor George Vallejo, North Miami Beach” along a black banner. Below is a computer-generated image of a municipality with high-rise towers in the foreground and the words “The Honorable George Vallejo.” Beneath, in smaller letters, is the phrase “The Mayor Who Brought Progress and Good Government to North Miami Beach.”

Vallejo was elected mayor of North Miami Beach in May 2011. During his time in office, garbage services were outsourced. Management of North Miami Beach’s water plant — which serves other parts of North Miami-Dade including North Miami, Aventura, Sunny Isles Beach, Miami Gardens, and Ojus — was also contracted out to a private company. The city’s zoning code was overhauled, allowing high-rise development with retail and offices in parts of North Miami Beach. The city even passed legislation creating a “brewery district” near NE 8th Avenue and 163rd Street.

Vallejo was re-elected in 2015 without opposition but suddenly resigned on April 10, 2018.

According to a press release issued that day by the Miami-Dade County State Attorney’s Office (SAO), Vallejo’s resignation was part of a plea deal stemming from criminal charges involving two \$5000 payments from a political committee first registered under his aunt’s name, but which he controlled. Those payments flowed to two companies registered in another person’s name, but which were really controlled by Vallejo and his wife, Sandra Shinego.

As part of his deal, the 52-year-old Vallejo pleaded guilty to two first-degree misdemeanor counts of violating state campaign finance laws. He resigned from office, spent 90 days under house arrest, and was sentenced to 18 months of probation and 500 hours of community service. He was also barred from seeking public office while on probation and had to write a public letter of apology.



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Former mayor George Vallejo pleaded guilty to two violations of campaign finance laws and was sentenced to 90 days under house arrest, 18 months of probation, and 500 hours of community service.

Ben Kuehne, a prominent defense attorney, helped negotiate Vallejo’s plea agreement, which, in Kuehne’s opinion, was a good one.

“What I can tell you is that Mayor Vallejo, now Mister Vallejo, has fully resolved his case,” Kuehne says. “He’s no longer an elected official. He’s continuing to contribute to his community in ways he can. He’s no longer interested in looking backward, only forward.”

Indeed, the SAO asserts in its plea agreement with Vallejo that he could have faced up to two years in prison for “false reporting of political expenditures” and “making and/or authorizing illegal political expenditures.” Instead the plea agreement resolves “any and all charges against the defendant and Sandra Shinego related to the filing of false reporting of expenditures by the political

committee Floridians for Progress,” as well as “actions known to the State Attorney’s Office and law enforcement officers related to or occurring during defendant’s tenure as the Mayor of the City of North Miami Beach.”

Some of the details of those “actions” were revealed on June 1, when prosecutors released a 168-page document titled “Sworn Statement of George Vallejo.” The statement is a transcript of a meeting Vallejo had, as required under his plea agreement, with assistant state attorneys Tim VanderGiesen, Nolen Andrew Bunker, and Robert Fielder on April 5, five days before he resigned as mayor. Vallejo’s defense attorneys, Kuehne and Jeffrey Sloan, were also present. As part of the plea agreement, Vallejo was granted limited immunity for what would be revealed during his interrogation by prosecutors.

During his session with prosecutors, Vallejo insisted all of his decisions were based on “facts and logic” and doing “the greater good.” But he later acknowledged using tens of thousands of dollars raised from two political committees set up under other people’s names to pay for personal expenses like trips, bills, sports gear, even beauty treatments.

In addition, prosecutors discovered that Vallejo’s wife received at least \$5000 a month from Dezer Development, a company run by Michael Dezer and his son Gil that built a number of condominiums in Sunny Isles Beach, including six Trump-branded towers. Michael Dezer also bought the Intra-coastal Mall for \$64 million in December 2013, which he and Gil intend to transform into a community with as many as 2000 residential units and as much as 2.5 million square feet of retail and office space in high-rise towers.

Vallejo didn’t want to be interviewed for this story, saying he’s now concentrating on his wife, who is battling cancer. “We’re not interested in participating and dredging up the past,” he says. “We moved on and, really, right now my wife’s health has been my focus.”

In response to written questions, a spokesman for Dezer Development says Sandra Shinego was hired as a private contractor in 2014 to plan parties and events for the Miami Car Museum at the Dezer Collection, a property at NE 19th Avenue and 146th Street in North Miami that’s now being transformed into a sprawling virtual-reality arcade. (See “Arcade Mogul,” April 2018.)

Dezer Development also states that Shinego was hired because the Dezers were impressed with her work in planning a past event. That event, Vallejo told prosecutors, was likely a reception for the *USS Philippine Sea*, a guided-missile cruiser commanded by his brother-in-law, Capt. Steve Shinego. Vallejo couldn’t remember the date of the reception, but it was probably November 2012.

“At no time did the Dezers try to hide [Shinego’s] role at the museum. On the contrary, her activities were public and open,” Dezer Development states via e-mail, adding that “her efforts have

Continued on page 28

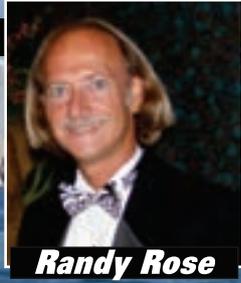
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North Miami Beach

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been integral to the operation of the venue,” and that she still plans events there. “The compensation paid to Ms. Shinego has been commensurate with both her responsibility and market-level pay,” the statement continues.

However, Vallejo himself never disclosed that his wife worked for the Dezers when he voted on zoning changes that allowed high-rise development at the Intracoastal Mall, or when he voiced support to obtain state funding to study ways to move more traffic in and out of the mall, a precondition backed by Commissioner Beth Spiegel, who lived in the adjacent neighborhood of Eastern Shores.

Prosecutors say that in 2015 Vallejo even lobbied state legislators in Tallahassee for \$8.9 million to modify NE 163rd Street in order to improve traffic flow at the mall, a budget item Gov. Rick Scott ultimately vetoed.

As for Dezer Development’s payments to Sandra Shinego, they were made to Creations Unlimited, a business that Vallejo registered in Wyoming, and to JATC, a limited liability company registered to a friend of his wife’s. But JATC was really owned by Vallejo and Shinego. Vallejo admitted to prosecutors that he created the shell companies because “I don’t like people all...up in my business.”

Barbara Kramer, a city commissioner who encouraged Vallejo to run for office seven years ago, admits she was shaken by some of things uncovered in the criminal investigation. “I don’t know what to think because I knew him as a hard-working mayor who always sought to do the right thing for the city,” Kramer says. “It hurt to read that.”

The prosecutors interviewing the former mayor were also interested in Keith Donner, a consultant who helped Vallejo win election as mayor and often advised him on political matters, as well as Donner’s business partner, Ringo Cayard, the controversial former head of the Haitian-American Foundation. (Prosecutors charged Cayard with racketeering and grand theft in March 2008, only to drop most of the criminal allegations later. Cayard was finally cleared following a pre-trial program for first-time defendants in 2013.)

Donner and Cayard represented the Dezer Development when it was



Undated photo of Michael Dezer at Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago.

seeking high-rise zoning from the city. Prosecutors wanted to know if Donner and Cayard had a hand in forming Vallejo’s two political committees, as well as details of their relationship with the Dezers.

In an e-mail to the *BT*, Donner asserts that the prosecutors’ interest in him and Cayard is in the past. “They were doing their job, following the money,” Donner states. “It’s safe to assume they wanted to trace any campaign money related to George from end to end.”

Donner adds that he, too, was shocked when he read the transcript of Vallejo’s interview with prosecutors. “That was an eye-opener,” he says. “Everything was detailed for the first time, and it was far more extensive than I had ever imagined. It was just a series of bad choices, one after the other. And it was entirely avoidable.”

But during their April 5 interrogation of Vallejo, prosecutors were very focused on Donner using his credit card to pay a monthly \$80 subscription fee for the Infusionsoft e-mail service that Vallejo used to contact constituents and potential donors. Assistant State Attorney VanderGiesen pointed out that Vallejo’s finances were in such shambles he hadn’t paid his house’s mortgage for more than a year, and that he carried a \$30,000 balance on his credit card “for years and years and years.” With Vallejo’s card maxed out, the prosecutor said, Vallejo couldn’t even afford the monthly Infusionsoft fee without the help of someone (Donner) who lobbies city hall.

Vallejo did not deny that Donner paid for the Infusionsoft service but claimed that a relative paid for his mortgage to resolve a foreclosure action on

his home.

Vallejo also swore to prosecutors that *he* set up the political committees and shell companies on his own, after consulting with Donner and conducting his own research.

Vallejo likewise claimed that he was the one who introduced Donner and Cayard to the Dezers, in hopes of countering criticism of their plans to develop the Intracoastal Mall.

More may soon be revealed. An official at the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office tells the *BT* that a dozen boxes of evidence related to Vallejo’s criminal case are expected to be released later this month, after confidential information has been redacted. That evidence includes materials prosecutors have obtained from the Dezers.

There’s plenty of other political intrigue in North Miami Beach besides Vallejo’s resignation and whatever those 12 boxes of evidence may contain.

On July 24, Commissioner Frantz Pierre was arrested on charges of bribery, money laundering, and grand theft involving a strip club at Biscayne Boulevard and NE 163rd Street called Dean’s Gold, as well as using a dubious nonprofit, that falsely claimed to provide lunches for disadvantaged kids, as a conduit for kickbacks.

Prosecutors say Pierre collected \$12,500 directly from Dean Tyler, operator of Dean’s Gold, in exchange for voting to give the strip club a 6:00 a.m. liquor license. He also collected \$12,770 from psychologist Jacqueline Alexis in exchange for soliciting donations to her Community Hope for Children and Families. Alexis did not attempt to disguise her kickbacks to the commissioner — she sent him checks drawn on her business account, PsychoEd & Consulting Services.

Defense attorney Ben Kuehne also represents Pierre. He maintains that Pierre “remains adamant that he engaged in no wrongdoing, and it’s too early to tell what the details of the case are.”

This wasn’t Pierre’s first brush with trouble. On May 24, the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics hit Pierre with a \$1000 fine and \$500 in costs for threatening to have a code compliance officer fired for daring two years earlier to cite his home for violations.

Continued on page 30

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North Miami Beach

Continued from page 28

Five months prior to that, Pierre was ousted from his commission seat by Vallejo and his colleagues for excessive absences. Rather than go quietly, Pierre, who suffers from heart ailments and kidney problems, retained Kuehne to sue the city to keep his seat. Following a judicial order, Pierre retook his seat on May 1, but he was suspended from office again, on July 26, this time by the governor.

Vallejo and Pierre weren't the only elected officials who left office before their terms ended. This past March, Commissioner Marlen Martell, a staunch Vallejo ally and friend of NMB City Manager Ana Garcia, resigned her seat so she could take a job as city manager of North Bay Village, a tiny municipality surrounded by Biscayne Bay with its own controversies. That gig lasted less than four months before she was fired by the Village Commission.

As a result of these vacancies, the North Miami Beach City Commission had difficulty fielding a quorum prior to Pierre being reinstated in May. During that same month, Beth Spiegel, a city commissioner since 2009 who frequently argued with Vallejo on the dais, was appointed mayor, and Fortuna Smukler, an Eastern Shores activist skeptical of rampant development, was appointed to Martell's old commission seat. In June, Ingrid Forbes, a food scientist and city resident since the early 1990s, was appointed to Spiegel's old seat.

Then, on June 28, the removal of two municipal officers hired at Vallejo's behest — city manager Ana Garcia and city attorney José Smith — first appeared on the city commission agenda. In response, dozens of residents and employees spoke in favor of keeping both officials.

In the end, the city approved a \$143,470 severance package for Garcia and a \$146,768 severance for Smith during a special meeting held July 10. Garcia was replaced by Esmond Scott, previously an assistant city manager who has worked for the city since the 1990s, on a temporary basis. Deputy City Attorney Sarah Johnston replaced Smith, also on an interim basis.

Citing the severance agreements, Mayor Spiegel declined to comment on the departure of both officials, except to say that the severance "wasn't personal" and "was in the best interest of the city."



Gil Dezer and his father have ambitious plans to develop the Intracoastal Mall.

However, Spiegel *did* want to emphasize that the city continues to function smoothly. For example, last month the city commission approved a development agreement allowing a 2.5-million-square-foot "micro city," similar to Midtown Miami. Called New Tower North Town Center, the project will be built on an 18-acre brownfield at 15530 W. Dixie Highway. In addition, the city is contemplating creating a "Chinatown" mixed-use commercial district along NE 163rd/167th Street.

"The city is doing fine," says Spiegel, a retired divorce attorney. "We're moving ahead."

Commissioner Anthony DeFillipo disagrees. He thinks the city is sputtering under Spiegel's leadership. "With Beth Spiegel being our mayor right now, it's

really become a very hostile working environment," says DeFillipo, a frequent ally of Vallejo when he was mayor and a friend of former city manager Garcia. "I want to bring this energy back to city hall and bring back a positive atmosphere and charisma, which is, right now, something we don't have."

DeFillipo wants to bring back that energy by becoming mayor. Three other people are currently running for the mayor's post as well: Spiegel, former North Miami Beach mayor Ray Marin, and civic newcomer Robert Dempster. Another ten people (so far) are running to fill five commission seats up for grabs this November 6. The number of candidates can grow or shrink before August 25, the city's deadline for candidates to file formal paperwork.

BT photo by Silvia Ros

The upcoming election has already aggravated things at city hall. Arguments between DeFillipo and Spiegel at the dais are common. During a July 17 commission meeting, resident Alter Gambarte declared his intention to recall Commissioner Phyllis Smith (no relation to José Smith) for first proposing Garcia's removal.

And then there's the conflict being waged between 28-year-old lobbyist Evan Ross and Stephanie Kienzle, who runs the VotersOpinion.com website that comments on politics in northeast Dade and south Broward. They are suing each other for defamation.

Kienzle, a friend of Vallejo, alleges that Ross used her own name to create the website StephanieKienzle.com to malign her. Ross claims that Kienzle's stories about him on VotersOpinion.com are "half-truths, whole lies, and selective coverage of issues to serve her personal agenda."

But that's not all. Kienzle, a former NMB resident who now lives in Davie, says that with Vallejo gone, Evan Ross is trying to take over the City of North Miami Beach. "He's behind all the stuff that's going on here, like the firing of Ana," she declares.

Ross, who lives at the Marina Palms Yacht Club and Residences, located at 17201 Biscayne Blvd., claims he just wants better government. "As a resident of North Miami Beach, I hope November's elections will usher in a commission filled with people who will put their egos aside, put residents first, follow best practices, and govern with ethics, integrity, and high character that sets an example for our neighbors," he states in a message to the *BT*.

Keith Donner, the lobbyist whose past clients include Dean's Gold, says he and Ringo Cayard are staying away from North Miami Beach until the dust settles — *if* it settles: "I am not getting sucked back into that city's vortex of crazy."

According to his Facebook page, Vallejo is originally from West Palm Beach. His LinkedIn page states that he received a degree in finance from the University of Florida in 1988. After graduation, he worked at Wells Fargo Financial as a bank manager for nearly 12 years. In 1994, while he was still working as a banker, Vallejo and wife bought a vacant waterfront lot

Continued on page 32

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North Miami Beach

Continued from page 30

in Eastern Shores for \$84,000. There they built a five-bedroom, four-bath house, which Vallejo and his family moved into in March 1999.

Soon after moving to NMB, Vallejo left his bank manager job and took up work as a mortgage executive, a property manager, and a real estate broker for various companies and for himself. At one point, he even had his own tax appeal business.

As a volunteer, Vallejo coached the Cubs, a Little League baseball team affiliated with the North Miami Beach Optimist Club.

“He was a great coach. The kids loved him,” says Kienzle of VotersOpinion.com. What impressed her most about Vallejo was his ability to calm disputes. “He was a peacemaker,” she says.

Vallejo became an activist in North Miami Beach when he became a director of the Eastern Shores Property Owners Association.

It was around this time that the city’s mayor, Ray Marin, sought to encourage high-rise development in certain parts of the city, including the twin 24-story towers called Marina Grande at Maule Lake, a project that would later be known as Marina Palms.

But some residents hated the idea of high-rises in the city. Among them was Bill Borkan, a wealthy medical device inventor who lived in Eastern Shores and didn’t want towers ruining his view. In 2007, Borkan funded the city commission campaigns of Phyllis Smith and Frantz Pierre, who unseated two pro-development incumbents. In 2009, Borkan struck again, bankrolling the victorious campaigns of Myron Rosner for mayor and Barbara Kramer and Beth Spiegel for commission.

Rosner turned out to be a mayor of questionable ethics, and it was during a meeting with like-minded civic activists at Commissioner Barbara Kramer’s Eastern Shores home that Vallejo began looking like a viable alternative. “We thought he would be an excellent candidate because he was intelligent and he seemed to understand government,” recalls Kramer, who now lives in Western Eastern Shores. “We were looking for someone to move this city forward because Myron wasn’t doing that.”

Keith Donner, who had worked on the campaigns of Spiegel and Kramer,



Political consultant Keith Donner on Vallejo’s crimes: “That was an eye-opener. It was far more extensive than I had ever imagined. It was just a series of bad choices, and it was entirely avoidable.”

says he was impressed with Vallejo. “George was a natural candidate on the stump. He was engaging, charming, and articulate,” Donner tells the *BT* via e-mail. “He connected with all the major voting blocs — gringos (including a lot of Italians and observant Jews), Hispanics, African Americans, and Haitian Americans. He even had the perfect political family, complete with a beautiful wife, two handsome sons, and even a cute dog.”

Vallejo’s only drawback: He was a “so-so” fundraiser. “It was always an unnatural act for him to ask for campaign contributions,” Donner adds.

Nevertheless, Vallejo unseated Rosner in May 2011. A year later, Rosner pleaded guilty to a felony charge of unlawful compensation related to unreported campaign donations. He was sentenced to three months’ probation. In October 2017, Rosner was arrested again, this time on four counts of securities fraud regarding a real estate project that was never built. A trial is pending.

Soon after his election, Vallejo and his colleagues on the commission had to deal with an imploding budget, dropping property values, and rising pension costs. Among his more controversial actions, besides outsourcing garbage collection

and the management of the water plant, was laying off 31 city employees — including the police chief and 17 police officers — to balance the budget in his first year in office. Vallejo also went through two city managers before Ana Garcia was hired.

But the creation of eight mixed-use zoning districts during Vallejo’s terms as mayor didn’t generate that much controversy. (See “City on the Verge,” November 2015.) Development foe Bill Borkan had died in September 2013.

The Intracoastal Mall property was one of the new zoning districts. Another was created at the intersection of NE 163rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard, where Dean’s Gold now stands. On February 20, 2018, the city commission approved an ordinance that would allow the CK Privé Group to replace the strip club and a nearby ABC Fine Wines & Spirits outlet with a million-square-foot high-rise complex.

Keith Donner says the city benefited greatly from Vallejo’s leadership. “I have not seen anyone in NMB who could have moved that city so far, so fast,” he says. “It now has a much broader tax base that is still growing, lower taxes, much better services, and like more than \$20 million in reserves, a sustainable debt and pension liability load.”

But Vallejo told prosecutors he remained fearful that a few cranky residents would derail his efforts to modernize the city’s zoning code and bring high-rise development to the city.

“If you want to stop something in North Miami Beach or anywhere else, get a few noisy people to show up and make some noise, and your easy-to-crumble elected officials will crumble,” Vallejo said during his April 5 interrogation by the State Attorney’s Office.

Vallejo maintained that he *really* believed that high-rise development, as envisioned under the revised zoning code, would be good for the city, especially at the Intracoastal Mall.

“Intracoastal Mall, prior to the city’s modernization, was permitted to have 15-story buildings all over every square inch of that property,” he said, “up to 25 feet away from the property line, along 35th Avenue, which was disastrous.”

With the new zoning code, Vallejo said, developers had to have a mix of

Continued on page 34

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District 2

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Political advertisement paid for and approved by Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall for Miami Dade School Board, District 2

School Board Member Vies to Continue Working for Children

Contributed

School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall has thrown her hat, or gele (her signature African headwrap), into the ring again to run for re-election to the Miami-Dade County School Board.

Dr. Bendross-Mindingall has represented District 2 since 2010 when she won in a run-off election after a hard-fought primary from which she emerged among five well qualified candidates. She said about the 2010 election and her ascension to the school board, "While it was a tough race, I was very pleased because having such a talented field of candidates meant you really had to be on your 'A game' at all times. The real winners were students and their families because whoever emerged from the pack was going to be competent.

Luckily, I was that person."

She ran on a platform that called for more educational options for parents and students, improved teacher pay, and safer schools. She made good on her campaign promises within her first year in office and has continued to build on those initiatives.

District 2 was the only school board district without a K-8 center when Bendross-Mindingall was elected to office in 2010. Today, there are eight K-8 centers and several more options from which parents can choose.

Dr. Bendross-Mindingall knows a lot about transforming students and bringing out their best. She began her career in education as a teacher with Miami Dade County Public Schools and then becoming an Assistant Principal, earning the prestigious Assistant Principal of the Year Award from the district.

She was eventually appointed to be

principal of Lillie C. Evans Elementary School in Liberty City which had one of the poorest attendance records in the county at the time. The school would make the largest jump in attendance in the district within her first nine weeks of leadership. She attributed the jump to her willingness to go into the James E. Scott Homes, a large, unwieldy project development, and bring the students to school.

"I grew up in the projects, so I wasn't afraid to cross the street and get the students. I eventually hired many of their parents to work at the school and helped them get off of welfare. Several have gone on to earn college degrees, and their children have earned college degrees. These are women who were jobless and on welfare. That's how you break the cycle."

In 2000, she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives

where she served until 2008 when term limits forced her to leave. She said education is her calling and her ultimate goal was to be on the school board.

She was quick to reply when asked what she could accomplish after such a storied career in education. "Item H-10; H-10 is a school board item that I sponsored and worked to pass, but, contrary to the norm, I hope we never need to use. H-10 says that the parent of a student who dies before graduation can participate in the graduation ceremony and receive that student's diploma. Losing a child is devastating and getting their diploma provides a little solace, but we want to keep our children alive and safe. In light of Parkland and other incidents, I am committed to ensuring that students are able to learn in a safe, nurturing environment," she said.

VOTE
#171

North Miami Beach

Continued from page 32

residential and commercial. They had to include parkland. They had to make sure there was proper traffic flow into and out of new developments.

Vallejo argued that mixed-use high-rise developments, like the Dezers' desired projects at the Intracoastal Mall, had the potential of providing the city an additional \$1.5 billion in taxes. "That would pay for a lot of police, a lot of parks, a lot of road improvements, just a whole lot of benefit throughout the city," he told prosecutors. "Unfortunately, there's a handful of folks that never have heard that story, that don't want to hear that story. And I have the feeling they're the kind of people that have you guys on speed dial or whatever. But, listen, it doesn't matter. I mean, it is what it is."

"See, that's not the issue," assistant state attorney Robert Fielder later replied.

His colleague, Tim VanderGiesen, was blunt: "I don't want to have a 100-page transcript of you guys going back and forth on Mount Theoretical."



BT photo by Silvia Ros

The owner of Dean's Gold strip club contributed to Vallejo's political committees and allegedly funneled money to Commissioner Frantz Pierre.

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VOTE ABSENTEE, EARLY, OR
ON AUGUST 28TH



Political advertisement paid for and approved by Kristy Nuñez for County Court Judge, Nonpartisan, for Miami-Dade County Court Judge



BT photo by Margaret Griffiths

Michael and Gil Dezer hired Vallejo's wife in 2014 to plan parties and events for their Miami Car Museum at the Dezer Collection (above), which is being transformed into a virtual reality arcade.

The prosecutors were really interested in Vallejo's political committees. Vallejo explained that he had been interested in forming his own political committee soon after he was elected mayor, as a means for allowing him to become "a more powerful elected official" who can "help move, drive your agenda forward."

Vallejo settled on forming what is known as a 527, after the IRS tax code that allows for the creation of tax-exempt political committees that can advocate for issues, but not directly for candidates. Such committees don't have to worry about oversight from the Federal Election Commission, and they file their documents with the IRS, not the FEC or state election officials.

In January 2013, Vallejo founded his 527 organization, which he called Progress NMB. Its purpose, as Vallejo explained to donors, was "to keep me strong with the voters" and "to push my agenda." But to insulate himself, Vallejo registered the group under the name of a neighbor. (That neighbor, whose name was misspelled in the interrogation transcript, could not be located by deadline.) In reality, there were only two

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- Bachelor of Arts, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, Dec. 1993
- High School Diploma, Miami Senior High School, June 1990
 (The Miami Herald Silver Knight Award Winner, Foreign Language Category, 1990)
- Over 20 years of family trial and litigation experience
- Represented over 1600 clients

PUNCH #140

Political advertisement paid for and approved by Lizzet Martinez for County Court Judge, Group 32 non partisan

North Miami Beach

Continued from page 35

members of Progress NMB: Vallejo and his wife. As Vallejo told prosecutors, “My wife is, she’s one of my political sounding boards and she’s like one of, I hate to use that word, political operative, but one of my political operative people, you know, in talking to the community, and talking to people, and stuff like that.”

Vallejo told the prosecutors he raised between \$25,000 and \$30,000 from donors, such as Marina Palms developer Neil Farman, the Dezers, and the operators of Duffy’s Sports Grill, which has a popular location at the Intracoastal Mall.

The money didn’t pay for political fliers or commercials. Instead, it was spent by Vallejo and Shinego personally. For example, Vallejo went on a trip to Sandy Springs, Georgia, a municipality renowned for outsourcing nearly all of its services. During his trip, Vallejo met the Sandy Springs mayor and deputy city manager. But the meeting coincided nicely with the baseball tournament he and his son attended in Sandy Springs. He also bought a baseball bat for his son using Progress NMB proceeds



City Commissioner Beth Spiegel was appointed mayor after George Vallejo resigned: “The city is doing fine. We’re moving ahead.”

Vallejo then confirmed to prosecutors that he and his wife spent Progress NMB money on car insurance, groceries, clothes, family dinners, salon treatments, another baseball tournament — this time to Sarasota — and some political gatherings in which he and his wife emphasized the importance of electing officials aligned with their pro-development, pro-business vision for the city.

Assistant state attorney VanderGiesen: “At the time, did you understand that you weren’t free to just spend the money however you wanted? That there are rules on how 527s can spend their money?”

Vallejo: “My understanding of the rules probably was a little more expansive than, you know, what I know now.”

VanderGiesen: “Do you recall how the purchase of the baseball bat was in furtherance of the 527?”

Vallejo: “Not a clue.”

In March 2015, using his aunt’s name, Vallejo created a regular political committee called Floridians For Progress, with the express purpose of advocating for changes in the city charter during a special election to be

Chris Pracitto

FOR COUNTY COURT JUDGE

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held in November 2016. (These records are available for viewing on the Miami-Dade Elections website.)

In the span of 20 months, Vallejo raised \$73,850 for Floridians For Progress. FFP's biggest contributor was Michael Dezer's wife, Neomi Dezertov, who gave \$30,000. Other major contributions included \$10,000 from Moore Investments, former owner of a W. Dixie Highway brownfield that's now slated to become the 2.5 million-square-foot "micro city." Russell Rosenthal, a prominent property owner, gave \$8500. Dean Tyler, operator of Dean's Gold, kicked in \$7500. ASA College, located within the Intracoastal Mall, donated \$5000.

Vallejo sent \$43,898 in FFP money to the Democracy Project, a political committee run by Keith Donner. Vallejo told prosecutors those funds were used for mailers and polling. Other expenditures went to candidates friendly to Vallejo's agenda and to other political committees. And, as mentioned earlier, Vallejo directed two \$5000 disbursements to shell companies that he and his wife controlled.

But after the charter amendment election was over, there was still \$13,237



Lobbyist Evan Ross, controversial for his political influence: "I hope November's elections will usher in a commission filled with people who will put their egos aside and put residents first."

left in FFP's account. Under state law, that leftover money had to be returned to

donors, given to a charity, or placed in a city office account "to be used only for

legitimate expenses in connection with the candidate's public office."

Vallejo went with the office account option, except he didn't transfer the funds to his mayoral office at the city. Instead the money was used to pay for various personal expenses. "All I can think of is that I was short money," he told prosecutors. "I, you know, moved the money here to loan it temporarily and then paid it back."

For instance, Vallejo said he put money back into his FFP account after he earned a commission for brokering the \$10.2 million sale of a site on NE 164th Street that is expected to become a 347-unit apartment building.

"I think that account still has a few hundred dollars in it," Vallejo told prosecutors.

VanderGiesen countered that it appeared that virtually all of FFP's funds were gone, spent on BillPay Online, Walmart, SunPass, Cuban Guys Sandwich Shop, and other personal items.

"A few hundred dollars, doesn't really pay a lot of bills in today's world," VanderGiesen said.

"No," Vallejo replied.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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New Kids on the Block

Miami Shores gets its first downtown wine bar

By Mark Sell
BT Contributor

For Kim Flower and Andy Wagner, it started with a chance remark six years ago on their usual Sunday walk through downtown Miami Shores, a block from their house.

“We walked up to NE 2nd Avenue and there was just nothing there,” remembers Wagner.

“We asked each other: ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to have a little pub to go to after our walk?’” adds Flower.

Unlike many others who have likely said the same thing, Flower and Wagner took the plunge and bobbed up swimming. On July 10, they opened Flight Wine Lounge and Shop at 9711 NE 2nd Ave., the first such establishment in the village’s 85-year history, and a likely harbinger of things to come. A week later about 50 neighbors, well-wishers, and local worthies jammed into the place for a second opening to sample the wines and artisanal pies.



BT photo by Sylvia Ros

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Andy Wagner and Kim Flower asked themselves: “Wouldn’t it be nice to have a little pub to go to after our walk?”

Out of Sync and Seeing Red

Biscayne Boulevard’s “smart” traffic light technology has a steep learning curve

By Francisco Alvarado
BT Contributor

Over the past 16 months, local Realtor Donald Wilson has become an observant student of the traffic light patterns along Biscayne Boulevard, particularly near his Palm Grove home in Miami’s Upper Eastside.

“I see problems all over the county, but here it affects me the most,” Wilson tells *Biscayne Times*. “Some days it can take me over ten minutes to go six blocks from 76th Street to 82nd Street.

There are days that traffic backs up to 73rd Street and NE 5th Avenue.”

A trim man with ocean blue eyes and a salt-and-pepper goatee, Wilson says he pinpointed the problem while stewing in bumper-to-bumper traffic sometime in March of last year.

“On Biscayne, you have four lights in succession at 78th Street, 79th, 81st, and 82nd that are out of sync,” he explains. “You have situations where the light at 81st turns red when the light at

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BT photos by Margaret Griffiths

Donald Wilson at the scene of his traffic nightmare: NE 78th Street looking north.

It's Democrat vs. Democrat in District 38

Controversial incumbent Daphne Campbell faces same-party challenger Jason Pizzo

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

Florida State Sen. Daphne Campbell is mingling just outside a tent on NW 151st Street and NW 7th Avenue. She's there with a hundred or so other people to help dedicate a segment of NW 7th Avenue as Robert "Bobby" L. Parker Memorial Way. Parker, who retired in 2009 as director of the Miami-Dade Police Department after 33 years, took his own life in 2015. He was 62 years old.

Parker was well known for volunteering with local youth groups. In fact, that's how Campbell says she met Parker and why she sponsored a bill naming this section of road in his honor.

"I'm the one who filed this last year to name the street in his name," she tells the *BT*. "That is my bill. I worked hard to make sure we honor him today."

Campbell, who was first elected as a Florida representative in 2010, is up for reelection in the August 28 primary. She says she has been instrumental in bring-

ing money to her district and addressing her constituents' concerns. Thanks in part to her stature in the Haitian-American community, Campbell hasn't lost an election. In 2016 the Democrat won against five other competitors

in a crowded primary for Florida's open and newly redrawn Senate District 38. She then went on to trounce former legislator Phillip Brutus's independent run in the general election. This, in spite of being investigated for Medicare fraud (related to nursing homes her family operates) and her tendency to vote with conservative Republican legislators on abortion (she's pro-life), religion (she has supported clergy "defense" bills), and education (she's favors expanding private charter schools).

On August 28, Campbell faces just one challenger: Jason Pizzo, a former prosecutor with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office. This time there's a decent chance Campbell will not win. In the 2016 primary race, Campbell garnered 9017 votes, but her Democratic opponents' combined votes far outstripped hers. All together, 20,061 people voted *against* Campbell.

"Daphne Campbell has been resilient over the years and finds a way to get reelected in the wake of several scan-



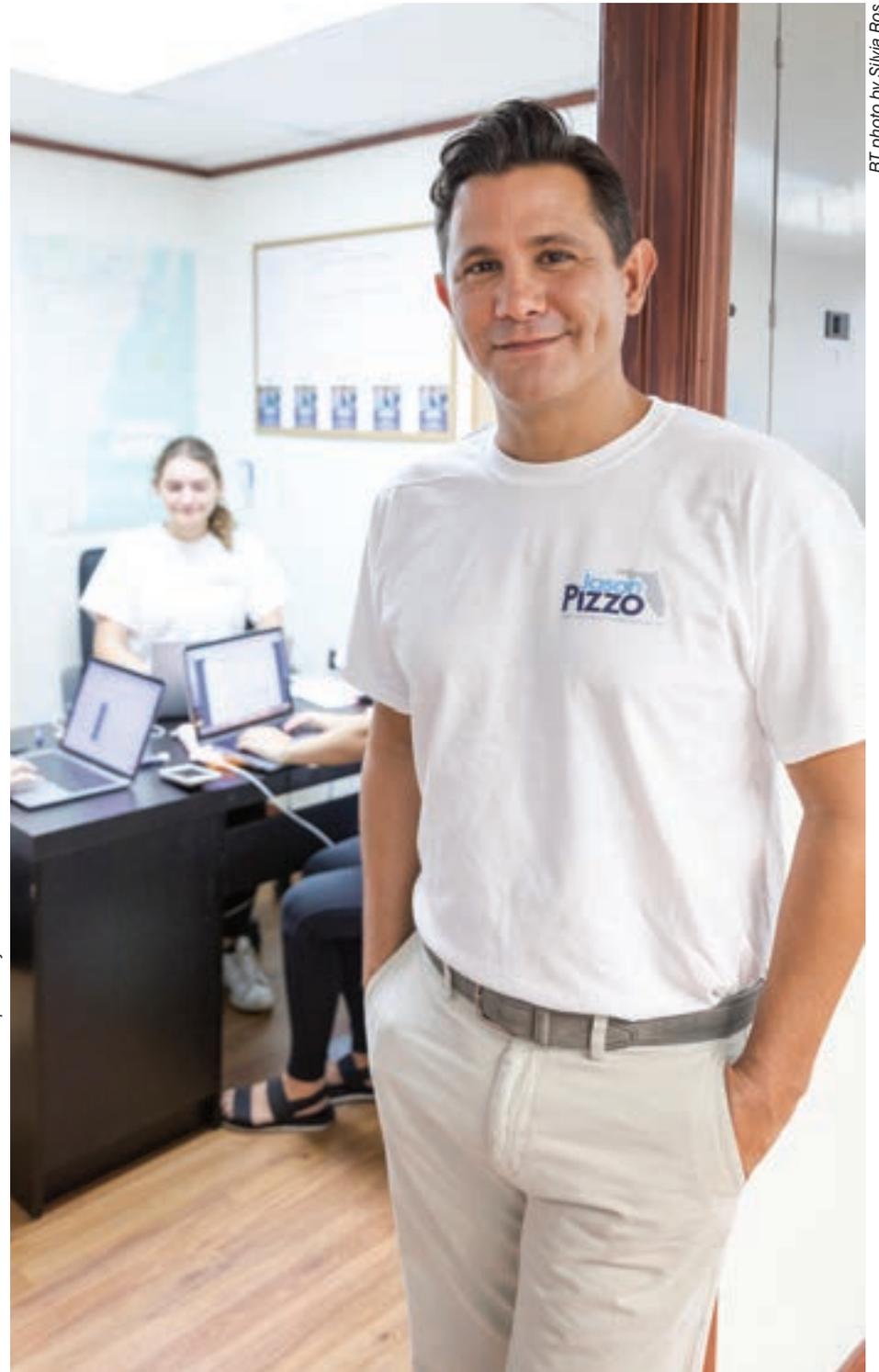
BT photo by Caitlin Granfield

Daphne Campbell: "When an opponent don't have nothing to show and don't have the message and don't have a platform, they go negative."

dals," says Sean Foreman, a professor of political science at Barry University.

"We know she has hardcore supporters who follow her to the end, even with all the controversy. But that said, this is a chance for the Democratic Party to

purge Daphne Campbell." Technically, the upcoming match between Campbell and Pizzo is a Democratic Party primary. Under normal circumstances in Florida's closed primary system, voters choose among candidates



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Jason Pizzo: "I'll give whatever it takes. I loaned my campaign \$770,000 last time."

in their own party; they can't vote across party lines. But the rules change when the only candidates running are in the same party.

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BT photo by Silvia Ros

Political consultant Christian Ulvert says Pizzo has assembled a larger coalition of supporters this year.

Democrat vs. Democrat

Continued from page 39

Since both Campbell and Pizzo are running as Democrats, all 249,871 voters in District 38 — 137,370 Democrats, 37,583 Republicans, and 74,918 affiliated with no party or a party other than Democrat or Republican — can cast ballots on August 28.

District 38 is a big place, encompassing the entire Greater Miami Beach area from South Beach to Golden Beach, as well as downtown Miami, Park West, Overtown, Wynwood, Omni, Edgewater, the Design District, Buena Vista, Little Haiti, Little River, Liberty City, and the Upper Eastside. District 38 also covers North Bay Village, El Portal, Biscayne Park, Miami Shores, North Miami, Bay Harbor Islands, North Miami Beach, Aventura, and the Skylake-Highland Lakes-Ojus region.

Jason Pizzo, a resident of Eastern Shores in North Miami Beach, also ran

in the 2016 District 38 primary, managing to finish second in a field that included former North Miami Mayor Kevin Burns and Miami Beach City Commissioner Michael Góngora.

In this election, Pizzo has received endorsements from the South Florida Council of Firefighters, the municipal workers union AFSCME, the Florida Education Association, the United Teachers of Dade, the Florida AFL-CIO, Equality Florida, State Sen. Barbara Watson of northwest Miami-Dade, the Florida Young Democrats, and the mayors of Miami Beach (Dan Gelber), Aventura (Enid Weisman), North Miami Beach (Beth Spiegel), Miami Shores (Mac Glinn), Bay Harbor Islands (Stephanie Bruder), and Surfside (Daniel Dietch), as well as a number of commissioners from those same municipalities.

Pizzo has a larger campaign account than Campbell, too. As of deadline, state campaign records show he's raised \$413,347, while Campbell has reported

raising just \$118,859.

A hefty chunk of Pizzo's campaign account, \$275,000, comes from loans Pizzo extended to himself. Businesses listed under the same address in Bridgewater, New Jersey, as Pizzo & Pizzo Builders and Developers, his family's real estate development company, kicked in another \$24,000.

Pizzo says he's still a partner in his family's company and is willing to pump more of his own money into his campaign if needed. "I'll give whatever it takes," he tells the *BT*. "I loaned my campaign \$770,000 last time."

Campbell maintains that she isn't worried. "Everything's going fine," she says. Her major campaign contributors include \$9000 from wholesaler Southern Wine and Spirits, \$5000 from prolific and controversial lobbyist Ron Book, \$5000 from Physicians Dialysis in North Miami Beach, \$4000 from Magic City Casino (which wants to build a card room and jai alai fronton in Edgewater),

and \$3000 from Aventura Hospital owner HCA Healthcare.

Campbell has also picked up endorsements: the Florida Police Benevolent Association, the Florida Medical Association Political Action Committee, 12 state legislators (including state Sen. Lauren Book, daughter of lobbyist Ron Book), El Portal Mayor Claudia Cubillos, Biscayne Park Mayor Tracy Truppmann, North Bay Village Vice Mayor Adreana Jackson, Golden Beach Mayor Glenn Singer, Miami Gardens Vice Mayor Erhabor Ighodaro, Miramar Mayor Wayne Messam, and Miramar Vice Mayor Yvette Colbourne. Miramar, it should be noted, is located outside the district.

But Campbell has new controversies to deal with. A video of her birthday party at the Miami Shores Country Club in May 2017 went viral after she received a Kate Spade-branded purse as a gift from Julio Alfonso, who was videotaped

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Traffic Lights

Continued from page 38

82nd turns green.”

Wilson says he’s made numerous complaints to Miami-Dade’s Transportation and Public Works Department about the glitches. Traffic engineers have re-synched the lights, but Wilson maintains that the problem keeps recurring.

“No one in the county is monitoring when this happens until they get a complaint,” he says. “Even then, it takes them a long time to fix it. The lights are out of sync again, but I haven’t received a response to my last complaint from two weeks ago.”

Wilson’s frustrations are essentially a microcosm of the daunting challenges facing the county’s elected officials and transportation gurus since they began taking steps in recent years to modernize Miami-Dade’s grid of 2884 traffic lights. “I see problems with the traffic lights everywhere on Biscayne Boulevard,” he adds. “And throughout the county, unfortunately.”

Indeed, morning and evening rush hours along Biscayne Boulevard now



Morning and evening rush hours along Biscayne Boulevard now start earlier and last longer than ever.

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Wine Bar

Continued from page 38

For now, Flight is open 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and until 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Wagner, a BBC veteran and the drive-time voice of WLRN-FM, Miami's NPR affiliate, helped operate a base pub while serving in the British army. He's keeping his day job while working the counter in the evening, he says. Flower, an architectural designer specializing in residential projects, had worked in restaurants and catering. She's winding down her design business to concentrate on Flight full time.

It's their first business together, one spurred by a shared passion for wine, food, and travel.

Inside, Flight's 1200 square feet offer dark walls, barstools, upholstered chairs, and 37 seats arranged for easy conversation and meeting. Among other things, its list of 30 wines includes three-glass "flights" (hence the name) of paired offerings, organic eight-dollar "ArtPies" with names like Mata Hari, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Marie Curie, and plates of pâtés and artisanal cheeses. There's a partial kitchen; locals supply most of the prepared food.

"One of our high points was to create a gathering place, a local community," says Flower. "That was the driving force behind this design. We wanted a place to go to."

"At last! Good news!" said Shores Councilwoman Alice Burch, echoing others, as she sat down at the bar recently with an Oregon Pinot Noir.

For downtown Miami Shores, Flight's opening is as clear a signal as any that the stars are finally aligned, now that the sewers are in after a generation of talk. A fresh jolt of energy is prompting new businesses to open and buck each other up. The newly formed Merchants Collective meets every Thursday morning.

Communal Miami Shores events are a village tradition. Plaza 98 is a gathering of businesses on the second Saturday of the month from November through April. Downtown throws itself open for the vast Green Day celebration along NE 2nd Avenue, scheduled for November 3 and organized by the Greater Miami Shores Chamber's energetic executive director, Megan Gerstel.

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BT photo by Sylvia Ros

Dark walls, barstools, upholstered chairs, and 37 seats arranged for easy conversation and meeting.



BT photo by Sylvia Ros

Start-up wisdom: Expect to spend somewhere in the low six figures and budget 30 percent more than planned.

Democrat vs. Democrat

Continued from page 40

shoving a wad of cash inside the purse. Alfonso is the founder of Solidaridad Sin Fronteras, a group that helps foreign health-care workers obtain or renew their licenses to work in the U.S. Campbell says she returned the cash, adding: "It was a joke!" (The website Politico later reported that Campbell had been lobbying for years to pass a bill on behalf of Alfonso's group.)

Jake Sanders, president of the Florida Young Democrats, didn't find it funny. The video incident, plus reports that Campbell had contacted an FPL lobbyist to have power restored for her family members in the wake of Hurricane Irma, was enough for his organization to endorse Pizzo, he says.

"We have a big problem with legislators who use their office for personal gain, and Senator Campbell seems to fall into that category," Sanders says.

Sanders was also disturbed by a *Miami Herald* investigation published July 3 that tried to determine where in District 38 Campbell lives. With the help of two of Campbell's former allies in the Haitian-American community, Nacivre Charles and Carline Paul, the *Herald* found evidence that the legislator never lived in at least three of the addresses she has registered with the state.

The home that Campbell has owned for the past 20 years, which is where Charles insists she really lives, is located outside District 38. Charles, who told the *Herald* that Campbell never paid him \$20,000 owed for his services during her last campaign, now works for Pizzo's campaign.

Campbell denounces the story as a lie planted by Pizzo. "When an opponent don't have nothing to show and don't have the message and don't have a platform, they go negative," she says.

Campbell claims that Pizzo didn't vote until 2016 and "had no involvement in the community." She also claims that Pizzo "was a Republican all of his life" until 2016.

Pizzo explains that he was registered as an independent while he was a prosecutor "to ensure impartiality and not appear partisan when administering justice." Pizzo slams Campbell's own voting record, stating that she is "often siding with the well-connected special interests and the Tallahassee Republican

insiders."

Pizzo adds that the one time he didn't vote in a presidential election was 2012, and that was because he and his family were in hiding after his car was stolen by juveniles he once prosecuted. The teens used Pizzo's car to launch a series of armed robberies before crashing it on the MacArthur Causeway. Pizzo didn't see it as a coincidence. "We got the hell out of Dodge," he says, adding that he and the family didn't return for several weeks.

According to a June 30 *Herald* story, Pizzo hadn't voted since 2008. In that article, Pizzo alluded to a "threat" to his family that prevented him from voting in 2012. As for the 16 other elections he skipped, Pizzo admitted to the *Herald* he didn't vote because "I was disenchanted with the political process."

Barry University's Foreman doubts that District 38 voters will judge Pizzo on his history of voting. "Ken Russell had a similar situation in that he didn't vote in previous elections," he says, "and he went on to win the Miami City Commission District 2 race."

Also, Foreman notes, Pizzo has become far more active since he last ran for District 38. "Since he lost to Daphne Campbell, he has been a loyal foot soldier for other Democratic candidates," he says. "I think that should earn him goodwill among the party activists who've been quite involved in the last several elections in Miami-Dade County."

Christian Ulvert, a political consultant who is advising Pizzo, says the candidate has assembled a larger coalition of supporters this year than he did during his 2016 campaign. "He was new, running for office for the first time, and he jumped ahead of a crowded field," Ulvert says.

Chris Norwood, a Democratic consultant who is also part of Pizzo's campaign team, is sure the head-to-head matchup will work to Pizzo's advantage. Norwood points out that Campbell won the District 38 seat in 2016 with just 31 percent of the vote. With that in mind, Norwood says, the Pizzo campaign labored to dissuade other Democrats from jumping into the race this year.

"There was a concerted effort to let everyone know that [Pizzo] was going to run again," he says.

Marleine Bastien, executive director of Fanm Ayisyen nan Miyami (Haitian

Continued on page 46



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BT photo by Sylvia Ros

Mayor Mac Glinn: “The word has gotten out about us modernizing ordinances for the sale of liquor and wine and beer.”

Wine Bar

Continued from page 42

Getting those crucial pedestrians year round isn’t so easy, however, with the scarcity of places to hang out, eat, drink, and meet. This is starting to change.

Sewers are one big reason for the improvements. While in the ground since last fall, actual hookups have come gradually. Flight’s sewer just got connected June 28, shortly after the 9999 Building, where Côte Gourmet recently reopened under new owners. Most buildings have yet to connect to the main lines, but more restaurants are about to enter the pipeline, with Mediterranean and Asian fusion restaurants planned for the 9801 Building in early 2019.

Lucio Coffee to Wine — under the ownership of Barcelona-trained chef Lucio Bueno at 9802 NE 2nd Ave. — offers Mediterranean cuisine for delivery only, and cheeses, wines, and chocolates. It’s also arranging pop-up chef nights at Flight. Open for 21 months, Lucio is right next to the Miami Theater Center, soon to launch its 2018-19 season and an emerging magnet for community events.

Flight and Lucio are part of a growing array of niche businesses united by a common theme of local products, sustainability, and quality.

In April, Alexandra Palomino and Raul Parra Orizondo opened Mima Market at 9725 NE 2nd Ave. It’s attracting word-of-mouth buzz through its sandwiches, empanadas, cookies, craft beers, and a growing array of local products.

“It feels like the beginning of something, a reawakening,” Palomino says. “People are coming in to talk, and neighbors are getting to know each other, which bodes well for what we’re trying to do. Our motivation is promotion of downtown and promoting each other’s business. We want to have fun together, too.”

They’re getting support from all quarters, from the chamber to Miami Shores Village Hall.

“There are lots of things the village has done to set the table, and it’s taken a lot of faith,” says Miami Shores Mayor Mac Glinn. “The word has gotten out about us modernizing ordinances for the sale of liquor and wine and beer. It’s going to take the courage of entrepreneurs like Kim and Andy to take the leap. There are still a lot of hurdles to open a restaurant downtown.”

For Flower and Wagner, it has taken resolve, grit, and clear vision. Not only is it their first time at this, it’s also the village’s.

Wagner and Flower got a flat No when mentioning a wine bar in 2014, and Wagner considered opening a sandwich place instead. That started to shift over the next year, with village elections and the decision to install sewers for businesses along NE 2nd Avenue.

In 2015, Miami Shores Councilman Steve Zelkowitz, a zoning lawyer and managing director at GrayRobinson, resolved to turn the couple’s dream into a permitted use, and embraced their cause. The village now permits sales of

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Traffic Lights

Continued from page 41

start earlier and last longer than ever. Thousands of commuters are agonizingly familiar with the choke points, from NE 123rd, 163rd, and 186th streets in the north to a long stretch of the Boulevard from downtown Miami up to NE 36th Street, and again through the Upper Eastside.

Transportation department spokeswoman Karla Damien says Miami-Dade is moving diligently to deploy new technologies, such as so-called smart traffic signals that will expedite travel on county roads, including Biscayne Boulevard.

“We can assure you that our engineers and consultants are working extremely hard to optimize traffic signalization in order to improve traffic flow on that corridor and throughout Miami-Dade County,” Damien says. “Soon, Mr. Wilson and thousands of drivers will start to see more green lights and less red-light time on Biscayne Boulevard.”

In July 2017, the Miami-Dade County Commission awarded a two-year, \$11.3 million contract to the traffic-management tech firm Econolite, based in Anaheim, California, to install more than 300 smart traffic signals and 675 video detection cameras along ten major corridors in Miami-Dade after the company completed a pilot program that resulted in a ten percent reduction in travel time along NW 36th Street between 71st and 82nd avenues, according to county documents.

Smart traffic signals rely on computer software to decide when to extend or reduce the timing of a green or red light, as opposed to automatic cycling of green and red lights based on commuting patterns determined by human engineers. Miami-Dade recently went live with smart traffic signals linked to about 100 cameras suspended 20 feet in the air at 34 intersections on U.S. 1 from SW 98th Street north to I-95.

Damien tells the *BT* that the transportation department has installed smart traffic signals, cameras, and corresponding equipment in the nine other designated corridors, including a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard from NE 11th Street to NE 82nd Street. However, the smart traffic signals are still in “learning mode” she notes.

“We are now in the process of adjusting the smart signals’ timing, and programming the controllers in order to

maximize travel time savings throughout the corridors,” Damien explains.

“This process takes time in order to get it done right. However, we have been expediting the work on all corridors, including Biscayne.”

Transportation department officials, including Frank Aira, the traffic signals and signs division chief, explained the challenges of managing traffic along Biscayne Boulevard and surrounding roadways to Wilson during a June 27 meeting the Realtor requested through the office of county Commissioner Audrey Edmonson, Damien says.

“We also provided information as to how traffic-signal engineers and consultants have been continuously reviewing Biscayne Boulevard data in order to make the appropriate traffic-signal timing adjustments on this road,” she continues, while disputing that the traffic lights go out of sync.

“The things that change are other unpredictable variables along the roadway and surrounding areas, such as construction work, accidents, breakdowns, or special events,” Damien says. “Biscayne is a very heavily traveled arterial, and it is over capacity, as the roadway profile has remained unchanged for the past 40 years, while high density redevelopment has occurred around it.”

Wilson counters that the county should have been investing funds to upgrade Miami-Dade’s traffic lights since voters in 2002 approved a half-penny tax increase for transit and road projects.

“They don’t have enough engineers to actually maintain the lights,” he says. “That infuriates me because it should be one of the number-one priorities for this half-penny tax we have. It should be used where there are the biggest traffic problems.”

He also insists that the traffic lights at NE 78th, 79th, 81st, and 82nd streets worked properly for about four days after his June 27 meeting with the transportation bureaucrats. “It’s been a month, and they haven’t fixed it,” Wilson says. “In my opinion, all four of those lights should be controlled in unison.”

Indeed, as recently July 25 in the early evening, Wilson’s observations bear out. The traffic light at NE 79th Street turned green at the same time the lights at 81st and 82nd streets turned red. When those lights turned green, 79th Street turned red.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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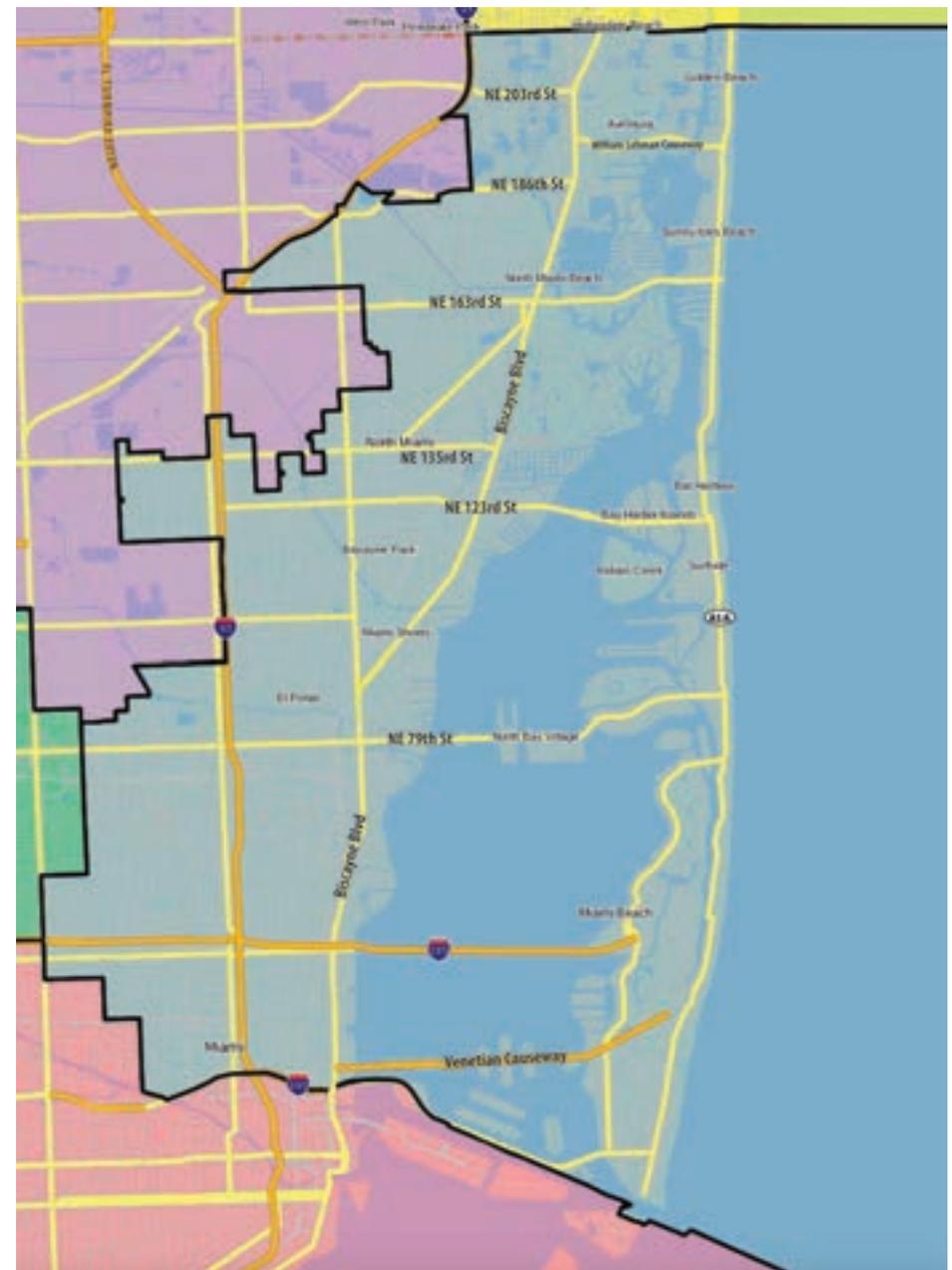
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“There’s no more diverse a state senate district — ethnically or economically— than this one.”

Democrat vs. Democrat

Continued from page 43

Women of Miami), says Campbell still has plenty of supporters in the Haitian-American community. “From what I heard, when people call her with a problem, she’s more responsive than other politicians,” Bastien says, adding that she herself is not yet endorsing either candidate.

But carrying just Haitian voters won’t be enough to win District 38. According to the Miami-Dade Supervisor of Elections, 32 percent of the district’s voters are Hispanic, 30.4 percent are black, 29.3 percent are white, and 8.4 percent are “other.”

“There’s no more diverse a state senate district — ethnically or economically— than this one,” Norwood says,

adding that Pizzo has the leadership qualities to represent all of the district’s socio-economic groups.

“Daphne Campbell is a trailblazer,” Norwood adds. “She’s the first Haitian-American senator in the State of Florida, and that’s a milestone, and we should respect that. But I don’t think she has the leadership skills to represent this district.”

Campbell insists she has been representing every part of the district, a fact that she routinely shares with everyone on her e-mail list. “When I am in Tallahassee, every two weeks I let them know what I’m doing,” she says. “I represent 15 cities. Every one of them knows the work I do. I have an open-door policy.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Wine Bar

Continued from page 44

spirits in full-service restaurants and sales of craft, but not mass-market beer, and of course wine. Live music is still not permitted.

The couple also discovered that getting things done takes more than a village. NE 2nd Avenue is a county thoroughfare, and outdoor seating on county-owned sidewalks can be problematic. The real sewer hookup is not with the village, but with the county Water and Sewer Authority and the Department of Environmental Resources Management.

Then there's patience. Construction started in October with an opening scheduled for December, then January, and finally July, once the sewer line was properly connected.

And, of course, there's money. County impact fees can run \$45,000 or more, though Flower and Wagner got a welcome break on this because of parking in the back of the lounge. While Flower and Wagner are reluctant to disclose the cost of opening their business, they say that anyone trying anything similar should expect to spend somewhere in the low six figures and should budget 30 percent more than planned. They also found that grant applications generally require two years of operating experience.

"This is our life savings," Flower says.

"These are our children," adds Wagner, gesturing to the wine and the menu.

Both are digging in with passion, good humor, adaptability, creative cost-cutting, and attention to detail. The floor gleams like amber but is simply slab concrete, epoxy, and polish. Look up, and you'll see holes every three inches in the black fabric air-conditioning ducts to even out circulation and minimize drip.

Ah, but the wine.

"There's a whole world of wines people don't know," Wagner says. "Our most popular wines this week include Pinot Noir from Oregon, and Albariño from Spain, and a surprising blend from Macedonia. It may not be on the wine map, but people have been making wine there for 2000 years."

Then, too, there's sustainability.

Says Flower: "We're proud to offer Salt Water Brewery out of Delray, founded by fishermen. They developed a six-pack ring that's actually fish food. We went right up to the brewery and tasted their beer. They're on tap and in

cans from us."

If local, sustainable, and unique — with just a touch of the offbeat — seems quaint or singular, Freddie Kaufmann says it is commercially necessary.

Kaufmann opened Proper Sausages at 9722 NE 2nd Ave. in 2013, which supplies customers, restaurants, and events with top-quality meats and sandwiches.

"That's the rule for a food retail business in a neighborhood like this to survive," Kaufmann says. "You cannot compete with the big-box stores, the Publixes, the Total Wines."

Todd Leoni, a major Upper Eastside landlord who also lives a block from downtown Shores, is experimenting with art galleries and food courts. Leoni owns the PizzaFiore building on the south side of 96th Street and the two-story, block-long building just to its north, which he has dubbed Palazzo Leoni.

"Right now, the idea is to see if we're getting people interested in the food court," Leoni says. "We're doing artist spaces. There's an overflow of artists from the Bakehouse Art Complex in Wynwood who got thrown out, and we're trying to establish a suitable space for them."

Just off the main drag at 211 NE 95th St., Ineabelle Soto and her husband, Anderson Martinez, launched Artsy Hive in June 2017, where people of all ages flex their art muscles to make ceramic creations.

"At this location, it can be a challenge to bring people in," says Soto, just before the 3:00 p.m. rush of parents and kids getting out of summer school. "We get our best results through Instagram and Facebook. We thought it was going to be mostly kids, but we're finding there's a need for young adults and seniors to make what works for them. We always tell folks: 'Take a break from electronics.' And then you post your creation."

Sarah Vahan and her sister, Hillary Reyes, bring a similar sense of mission to their plant shop, Pebble and Vine, at 216 NE 98th St. They opened the business in November 2017, with a passion to educate people about the health-giving benefits of indoor plants.

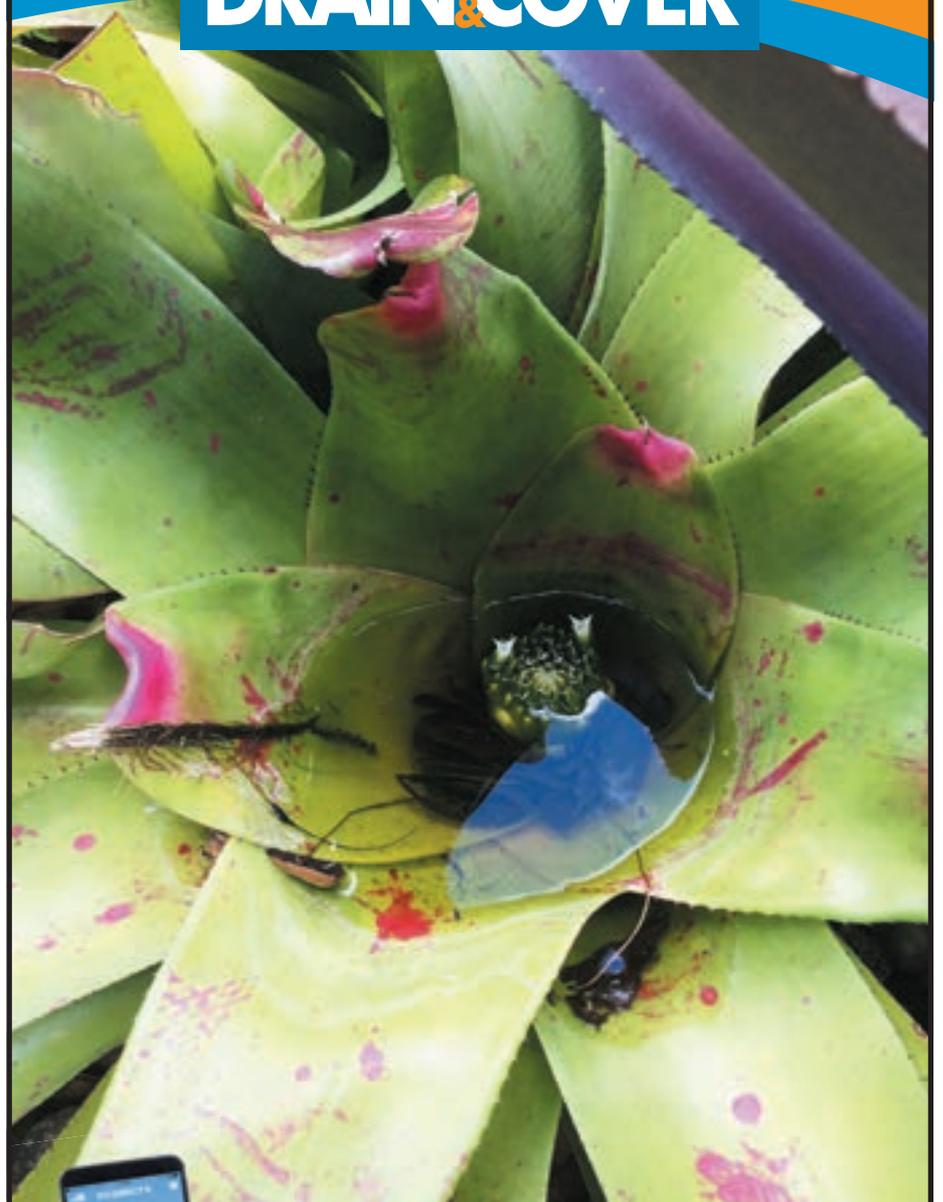
"It's our goal to make this a vibrant and beautiful and bustling downtown," says Vahan. "Things are changing, and in three years, I don't think you'd recognize downtown. All the shops will be full."

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Sex and Money

Budget challenges and #MeToo heat up city hall

By Mark Sell
BT Contributor

No tropical systems threaten Florida as of press time, but North Miami City Hall is weathering its own storms.

The city council may be in recess, but these dog days offer a political sex scandal, a daunting budget, rising garbage and sewer rates, and an accelerated effort in the Arch Creek East Nature Preserve to discourage bulldozers from plowing through native plantings.

First, some good news. If you live in North Miami, your tax rate will probably not go up. On July 10, the council voted to cap it at the current 7.5 mils, or \$7.50 for each \$1000 of assessed valuation. The council also scheduled budget hearings for September 4 and 17.

Here's our dip into the news.

The scandal: In mid-July, *Miami New Times* broke a story of a federal sexual harassment claim against Councilman Philippe Bien-Aime, who's running for mayor and reported \$77,441 in contributions as of July 10.

A political setup? We can't attest to the merits of the claim. Still, it could change the election landscape. The suit is highly specific, accuses the councilman of multiple come-ons to a married former aide, and doesn't reflect particularly well on deputy city manager Arthur J. "Duke" Sorey Jr. or city manager Larry Spring. If anything, the contents reveal an undercurrent of a "go along to get along" personnel culture, with whiffs of Tammany Hall, protecting the favored and discouraging whistleblowers. At first glance, it has the earmarks of a case you'd want to settle out of court fast.



BT photo by Mark Sell

Sam Van Leer and volunteer Paul Gorwky uproot Australian pines for native plantings in the Arch Creek East Nature Preserve.

It's also but the latest in a string of nearly a dozen lawsuits or employment actions against the city, mostly stemming in one way or the other from the July 18, 2016, shooting of behavioral therapist Charles Kinsey.

Anniversary: Speaking of that shooting, there's a worthy podcast about its fallout and what happened to one of the victims. *Aftereffect*, from WNYC

Radio in New York, follows the life of 27-year-old Arnaldo Rios Soto, the autistic man Kinsey was trying to protect.

The podcast is worth a listen for anyone who cares about how we treat our most vulnerable, and what happens after the headlines fade. While North Miami police have instituted training for dealing with people on the autism scale — now Florida law — the broadcast is a

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Needs and wants: This is our third month on this subject, but it's safe to say that the city faces crushing needs, with groaning infrastructure and bloated payrolls and pensions. North Miami is not alone here, but its emergency reserves are perilously low.

Stormwater capital needs were estimated at \$57.9 million, from a 2012 master plan, for remediation in the Arch Creek and Biscayne Canal basins. The city manager has spoken of full implementation in 2040. Can we afford to wait that long? All municipalities in this area must prepare for buyback of the growing number of properties that will be unlivable because of repeated flooding.

If that seems overwhelming, one can start with 11 unfunded priority projects, identified last year by the city's Floodplain Management Committee, totaling roughly \$10 million. The largest project, at more than \$6 million, would line sewer pipes from the inside to prevent leakage into the environment. Another would require \$750,000 to buy three flood-prone repetitive-loss properties,

surely among the first of many. This will require county, state, or federal help. The city can't afford to go it alone. The council voted July 10 to pay nearly \$2 million to replace two wastewater pump stations. Expect more of this.

Affordable housing is another necessary conversation. Landlords have started to raise rents to unconscionable levels in some of the less inviting apartment buildings along NE 6th Avenue. At one council meeting, a group of residents said they were facing eviction because the landlord at their building on 138th Street was raising their rents from \$1000 to \$1600. This in a house-poor city in one of the more house-poor counties in the United States. Here, too, attention must be paid.

Your rates are going up: There's no way around this. Stormwater and garbage rates haven't changed in the past five years and are running into big deficits. The stormwater rate is now \$74.28, unchanged since 2014. The state average is \$93. The city is proposing \$92.28 in 2019.

Garbage is trickier. Here, too, the rate is artificially low, at \$252.48 a year, unchanged since 2013. The city is recommending raising it to \$420.

The city has contracted out these services to Waste Pro since 2012, when the council under Mayor Andre Pierre voted to give the trash hauler a no-bid private contract. Residents, businesses, and council members have since grumbled about the service. Both Pierre and former Councilwoman Marie Steril received bundled checks from Waste Pro principals totaling more than \$5500. In north Florida, the *Tallahassee Democrat* recently reported that Waste Pro executives have been called before a federal grand jury in a probe of corruption in the capital city's government.

When renewal time came this year, North Miami approached eight companies and met with four firms: Waste Pro, Waste Management, Great Waste, and World Waste Recycling. Only Waste Pro came back, proposing a \$25 million contract over seven years with three extensions.

Smith Joseph was incredulous July 10, and started shouting from the dais. "We are so bad as a municipality that no company wants to conduct business with us?" he asked. "This is insulting! This is insulting for you guys to even present this to us. Eight companies come here.

The City on the Move. The City of North Miami. The fifth-largest city. They don't want to conduct business with us? We are that bad? We are that crooked?"

The city talked about taking back trash collection, but city officials estimate that this would cost \$20 million for the equipment, plus \$7 million a year, rather than the \$6 million a year now.

This story isn't over. The contract expires in May, right at election time. Barring further progress, the city faces a sticky time trying to squeeze out of its Waste Pro embrace.

FIU vs. North Miami: While this front seems quiet after FIU's victorious legislative effort to get the upper hand in running a four-lane road through the city's Arch Creek East Nature Preserve (see "Face-off: North Miami vs. FIU," July 2018), the Urban Paradise Guild's Sam Van Leer has stepped up his native plantings from one morning a week to at least three, replacing Australian pines with native species in the withering heat. So enjoy August, watch those tropics, wear sunblock and floppy hats, and stay hydrated!

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Roots and Wings

Parental fears aren't based on facts

By John Ise
BT Contributor

Memories of the carefree summer days of my childhood are among my fondest. Aside from a six-week stint of summer camp, the days were occupied with ventures into nearby woods, endless trips on my bicycle, and aimless wandering about town with friends.

Weekly I'd be handed a five- or ten-dollar bill to walk the five blocks to Safeway and get groceries for the family. Many a time my mother would kick me out of the house, instructing me to return in time for dinner. With no cellphone, it was an illuminated streetlight that cued me to return home.

For us kids, everything was outdoors. Television cartoons were limited to Saturday mornings, and video games were

confined to arcades and limited to the number of quarters you had. There was little formal programming for kids, and the annoying term "playdate" hadn't yet entered the lexicon. Like the 1985 movie *The Goonies*, childhood was mostly unsupervised, independent, autonomous, and free.

But today parents and kids alike seem to be nervous wrecks. Leaving your child at home alone conjures thoughts of impending catastrophe. We don't allow our kids to walk the neighborhood alone, go to the Miami Shores or El Portal tot lots by themselves, or even walk to Miami Shores Elementary. Instead of playing outside, they are stressed with excessive homework or they rot in front of their electronic screens.

Fear, anxiety, and overzealous parenting have taken hold of us. From websites that purport to show the proximity



of every sex offender in your neighborhood to hyperventilating posts on social media that hype threats of crime and tragedy, we now see the world as a scary, threatening, and dangerous place. Above all else, it seems, we think we must keep our kids indoors to protect them.

High dives at local public pools and even backyard trampolines seem to be relics of the past. And worse — in 2014 a Maryland couple, Danielle and

Alexander Meitiv, were actually investigated (and ultimately cleared) for neglect by child welfare officials after they let their ten- and six-year-old children walk home by themselves from a local park just a mile or so from where they live.

Locals intuitively know something is amiss. Chris Gaviria recalls growing up in Miami Shores, biking from one end of the village to the other, and passing summer doldrums fishing in the canals.



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Councilman Sean Brady recounts that he'd routinely cross Biscayne Boulevard to walk to elementary school, something he soon hopes to teach his own eight-year-old.

On a trip to the Miami Shores tot lot, which posts rules that all youngsters need adult supervision, random parents immediately lit up about the loss of childhood self-reliance. Resident Nick Timbaldi, eyeing his daughter, bemoans the fact that kids don't live the life he did growing up. Reminiscing about a childhood where he'd ride his bike until 9:00 p.m., he somewhat guiltily notes how sheltered today's kids are. "They might as well be bubble-wrapped!" Laura Fiumara of North Miami: "We're eating stress."

Yet the stress we're eating is primarily of our own creation. We fear for our children, we look at every stranger as a potential kidnapper, and we act as though threats loom on every corner. But the crime wave that exists is the one in our heads.

According to City-Data.com, from 2002 to 2016, overall crime has dropped by about 30 percent in Miami Shores, 33 percent in Biscayne Park, and 24 percent

in El Portal. What has risen is the *perception* of worsening crime. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in late 2016 found that 57 percent of all registered voters believe crime has gotten worse since 2008, despite double-digit percentile decreases in both violent and property crime rates for the period.

Locally, the three-year trend 2012-2015 for "accidental child deaths" in ZIP codes 33138, 33161, 33150, 33167, and 33168 is about one every three years, according to Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration. That is tragic for that child's family, but when put in perspective of a total child/youth population for those ZIP codes — more than 37,000 — the chances of accidental death equate a minuscule 0.00003 percent.

As in baseball, keep your eye on the ball, or in this case, the statistics. There's no data-driven evidence for our fear.

Yet fear and anxiety persist. The more that safety and order prevail, in fact, the more we perceive anarchy. A deeper dive into our collective psyche attributes our dim view to what sociologists call "pessimistic bias," the conviction that things are worse than

they are and used to be.

And the truth is that dangers encountered on the Internet by children arguably outpace the outside world. Sex, violence, bullying, and predators are more likely to be stalking our children online than in our local parks. We require adult supervision at our parks, but how many of us supervise our kids' online activities?

I'm not promoting parental neglect, but I'm frankly more afraid of Miami's drivers who careen like unguided ballistic missiles. For most kids, a visit to the recreation fields means crossing the four lanes of NE 6th Avenue or Biscayne Boulevard, where drivers on cell phones whiz by at 45 mph. (Planned pedestrian crosswalks on NE 2nd and NE 6th avenues will provide some relief.) And of course, if there were drug dealers and gangs on the corner, it would be irresponsible to allow kids to roam freely.

"Kids are play-deprived nowadays," says Katherine Reynolds Lewis, author of *The Good News about Bad Behavior* in a recent NPR interview. "Two or three decades ago, children were roaming neighborhoods in mixed-age groups,

playing pretty unsupervised. They were able to resolve disputes. They planned their time. They managed their games. They had a lot of autonomy, which also feeds self-esteem and mental health."

Utah recently became the first state to allow parents to adopt the "free-range kids" philosophy without fear of being accused of neglect. The state law allows youngsters whose basic needs are met to "travel to commercial or recreational facilities, play outside, and remain at home unattended."

Let's admit that it takes an affirmative effort to free ourselves from irrational fears and anxieties, particularly as they relate to our children. Accompany your kids on local walks, and then begin to nudge them out the door...and out of the nest.

Build their confidence to venture out on their own and to interact appropriately with the outside world. It's said that parents' prime responsibility is give their children roots and wings: roots to know where home is, and wings to fly off and practice what has been taught them.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Referendum That Disses the Voters

Self-serving city commission tries to KO term limits

By Jay Beskin
BT Contributor

As a former commissioner here in Aventura, I am loath to take potshots at current or former occupants of that position. That would be what we call in Latin *rhinoplastium odium facsimilium*, and we must respect our Latino community.

In English, of course, it's known as cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. There are plenty of plastic surgeons in Aventura standing by to cut off my nose for any reason at all, including ethnic cleansing, but their prices are nothing to sneeze at. Besides I treasure my nasal passages, especially the ones my teacher read to the class in Hebrew school.

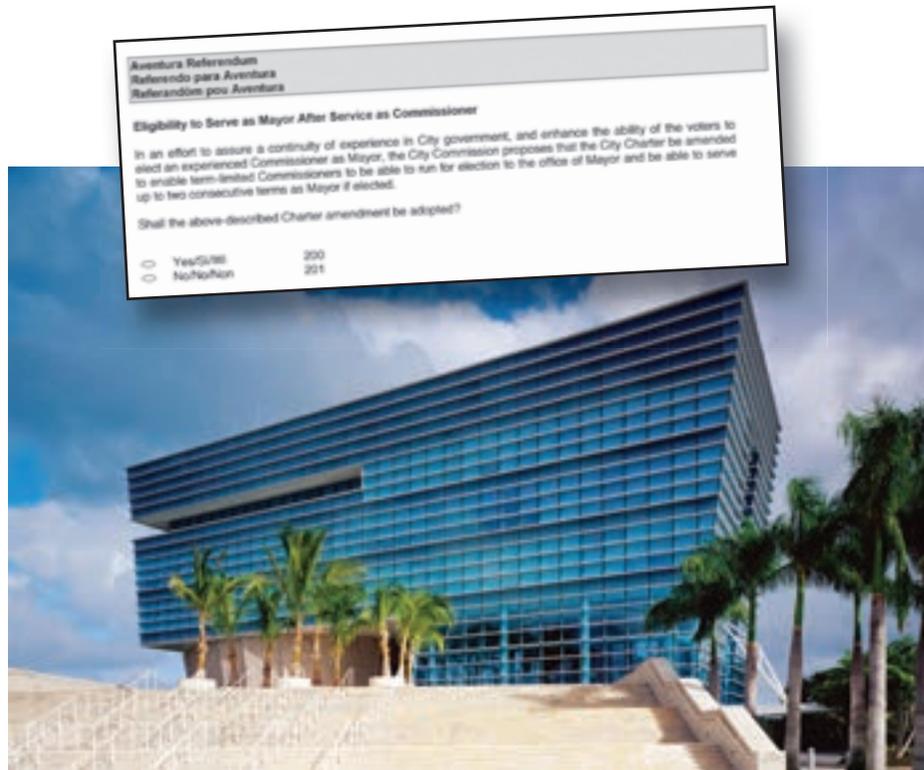
The fact remains that the special referendum in the upcoming election at the end of August is Aventura at its worst,

an embarrassment to those who live here, those who serve here — and quite possibly illegal to boot.

For those of you who have not been following, let me bring you up to date. About nine years after the founding of the City of Excellence, the voters determined by referendum that term limits would be beneficial in preventing commissioners from establishing little fiefdoms, with all the attendant dangers of slouching into corruption, complacency, and paralysis.

It was also understood that if those term limits were not established in law early on, it would be many times more difficult to introduce them later, when interests would have become more entrenched. So since 2006, the law provides that commissioners can't serve more than two terms in office.

The founders were astute enough to anticipate the danger of rotation



monopolies, as well. Some other localities have limits only on consecutive terms, so if a fellow served eight years as governor, his wife could then serve four years, whereupon he would return with a new clock — or calendar, as the case may be.

But Aventura anticipated this eventuality, so the law closed that loophole by limiting officeholders to two terms per lifetime. If you can bring documentation proving you were resurrected, that might be an interesting test case, but other than

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that, it's two and you're through.

The law was extended to include the mayor's job. In other words, you can be commissioner twice, or commissioner once and mayor once, or mayor twice — but twice a commissioner disqualifies you from not only returning as commissioner but also from graduating to mayor.

The argument was that the mayor position is not different enough from the commissioner position to warrant its own reset button. This is a debatable point, and one day perhaps we should devote a column to that debate, but for today we are looking at the effort to upend this provision through a referendum.

Until now, Aventura residents have resolutely resisted the watering down of term limits via a referendum held subsequent to 2006. That referendum was proposed by an independent charter review commission, and was, at least, colorable as an effort to better city government. In that referendum, we voted down an effort to switch the term-limit terminology to "consecutive terms," so commissioners could take a one-term hiatus and then try to start over. Thus, the proclivity of the voters is known, and it would not be easy to get them to allow two-term commissioners to run for mayor.

To "solve" this problem of voter reluctance, the wording of the new referendum offers not only facts, but opinions. It reads:

In an effort to assure a continuity of experience in city government, and enhance the ability of the voters to elect an experienced commissioner as mayor, the city commission proposes the city charter be amended to enable term-limited commissioners to be able to run for election to the office of mayor and be able to serve up to two consecutive terms as mayor if elected.

This time, the city commission didn't even bother laundering this proposal through an "independent" charter review.

How wrong is this language? Let me count the ways.

First of all, the grammar is so awful it would have been marked up in red pen by a sixth-grade English teacher. "To enable... to be able... and be able..." There are a lot of "ables" here, but very little ability.

Second, this is not even presented in question form, as *Jeopardy* answers and municipality referendums should be. It is phrased as an argument, as salesmanship, as a plea. My first inkling was to compare it to subliminal messages in advertising as outlined in *The Hidden Persuaders* by Vance

Packard. But upon re-examination, there is nothing hidden or subtle about this language.

To get a handle on how outrageous this is, we can imagine a referendum on legalizing gambling:

In an effort to assist individuals suffering from an overabundance of both money in their pockets and time on their hands, and in an effort to enrich the coffers of the city through taxation of such excess pockets of funding, the city commission proposes they be allowed to blow the rent money on games of chance.

Sounds right? Sounds appropriate? Sounds legal?

The third and most important problem here is not the chutzpah of making an argument, but the hollowness of the reasoning, and the transparency of the self-serving city commission. This is worse than our imaginary gambling referendum. This is more like those comical letters a group of siblings sends their parents:

In an effort to assist individual young people to navigate their way through the vicissitudes of high school and college life, the Committee of Smith Family Children proposes that all students be granted allowances of several hundred dollars a

month with no strings attached, to enable them to be able to have some spending money and be able to smoke in the backyard without parental detection.

As for the reasoning that citizens need to be "enabled" to elect an experienced commissioner as mayor, at a time when our governor and president both came directly from the business world, it is absurd on its face. The mayoralty is an administrative position of sorts, a leadership position that reflects similar posts in business, education, health care, et al. No cities are collapsing around us because their pools of mayoral candidates do not include experienced, "term-limited" commissioners.

Methinks our commissioners have committed a host of errors of commission, and a few errors of omission to boot. The chances of passage are problematic, depending upon who even pays attention to this sort of stuff, but the message to the voters is echoing loudly in their ears.

One hesitates to characterize the content of that message other than to say this: Whatever this shows the voters, it ain't respect!

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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The Art of Relief Printing

Tom Virgin works in the delicate form of letterpress

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

Tom Virgin believes in the power of art and how it can help create a better, more connected community. The Miami-based high school

teacher and activist is also a printmaker and artist who works in woodcuts.

In addition, he's the founder of Extra Virgin Press in Little Haiti, which makes letterpress book arts and broadsheets. Letterpress is the key to the artistic niche Virgin has carved out for himself. In the



Images courtesy of Extra Virgin Press

The Home, with Michael Hettich, letterpress, from Home/s portfolio, 2017.

I DON'T KNOW IF THE BIRD
YOU ARE HOLDING IS DEAD
OR ALIVE, BUT I DO KNOW
THAT IT'S IN YOUR HANDS.
IT IS IN YOUR HANDS.



Toni Morrison 1993

...the courage and obstinate resistance of Haitians remains. We survive and given the opportunity, we thrive. Edwidge Danticat 2018 #The Foreigner's Home

In Your Hands, with Edwidge Danticat and Toni Morrison, letterpress, 2018.

age of digital media and imagery, letterpress relief printing is an old-fashioned and labor-intensive craft.

As Virgin explains, you can see the hand involved in the finished product. You can “feel the emboss, see the grain, the human hand on the page. It is effective, efficient, and beautiful.”

Using letterpress, Virgin came up with a fascinating project, a collection of broadsheets — single-page sheets, like the old broadsides used for disseminating news of the day — for which he asked writers to submit extremely short poems or works of fiction.

“I asked each writer for 100 characters,” he says, “including punctuation and spaces — flash fiction, a prose poem, poetry, a koan, a prayer.”

Local contributors to the project include authors Edwidge Danticat and John Dufresne; poets Campbell McGrath, Michael Hettich, Denise Duhamel, and Mia Leonin; and journalist Nadege Green. Virgin says he asked each person to send him “text that provides a window to your community that is also an introduction to your work.” He then combined their texts with imagery and, in the process, created artistic posters. As he quips, they’re “kind of like a literary speed-dating outlet, Tinder or Bumble for readers.”

But speed has no part in the actual process at all, says Virgin. The time to make them is what makes the printed works important. “You really have to choose what you’ll print,” he explains.

Virgin has now crafted letterpress posters for the Little Haiti Book Fair, and for artists showing at the Emerson Dorsch gallery and PAMM; he also makes book covers and artists’ books. His own artwork has been shown at galleries, libraries, and universities.

Virgin was also instrumental in the SWEAT Broadsheet Collaborative, which starting in 2008 brought together 46 visual artists and 40 writers from South Florida, and eventually resulted in 78 broadsheets made from letterpress, silkscreen, etchings, and other media. Some of them have since been shown in spaces from Portland to Minneapolis, and numerous locations from Palm Beach down to the Miami-Dade College Kendall Campus.

Virgin stresses that the collaborations he works on between artists and writers are as diverse as Miami, with artists from minority communities, a strong voice from women, and, as a teacher, involvement of the young community. “As I come to the end of almost 25 years of teaching and learning in a Title I public high school,” Virgin says of his retirement next year, “I hope to transition into offering messages and small chunks of literary content to my students through teaching letterpress, printing, and book arts.”

The new space of Extra Virgin Press opened on NW 2nd Avenue in Little Haiti after receiving a 2015 Knight Foundation arts grant. Along with some of the broadsheets and artworks, there are two presses, and it is exciting to watch physical



Red Wing Boathouse, woodcut, 2014, by Tom Virgin

printing in progress during a visit.

Across the street, Virgin can also observe the lively neighborhood that is rapidly being displaced by gentrification and development, something that concerns him as well. But, he says, the arts can create a conversation in this current difficult climate.

His conversation is not isolated to South Florida. A native of Detroit, Virgin spends much of the summer in the small city of Red Wing, Minnesota, at the Anderson Center at Tower View, an arts and residency center along the Mississippi River at the Tower View estate of Alexander Pierce Anderson, a botanist who created the first “puffed” rice and wheat cereals developed under the Quaker brand.

The twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, just a few hours away, have been a focal point for letterpress and

printing, and the match proved perfect for Virgin. As a result of those summers, he adds, “the letterpress has become a part of my world at home in Miami.”

He says he’d now like to bring these regions together. “I have students who have never been out of Miami,” he explains. “I grew up in the Midwest and want to share that world with them.” It is just one part of the latest mission for a man who never seems to sleep.

“Along with bringing these works to my students, I’ll assemble Midwest and South Florida writers into a portfolio for placement in exhibitions and collections, featuring artists, printers, and writers,” he says. “I’m hoping to put more writers in museum collections at the intersection of ideas and image.”

He adds that Extra Virgin Press’s first portfolio, *Home/s*, is to be purchased by PAMM and is already in the Jaffe Center



Tom Virgin at work: “I hope to transition into offering messages and small chunks of literary content to my students through teaching letterpress, printing, and book arts.”

for Book Arts at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, the University of Miami Special Collections, and the Frost Museum at Florida International University.

Home/s was the first Extra Virgin Press community project, and included artworks from the paired combinations of writer Danticat and artist Laura Tan; poet McGrath and artist Pip Brant; and poet Leonin and artist Adler Guerrier, among others. They were asked to offer views on “our common home” in the form of literary broadsheets.

Although a printmaker and wood carver for 40 years, Virgin says he first dabbled in letterpress — in Silver Springs, Maryland, in 2004 — because he was interested in the various ways that print could be produced. He came to realize that creative and tactile text could be art.

After moving to South Florida, he developed a long relationship with the

Jaffe Center, which is a hub for printing, as well as bookmaking. Founded by Arthur Jaffe, who had built a large collection of limited-edition artists’ books, the center holds workshops on book binding and paper decoration, and has several presses. Virgin found a home there for print making and a mentor as well; Jaffe, who died in 2015, had bought his first book.

Now Virgin would like to continue the tradition with workshops here in Miami, and is generally inviting the community to come see the stories that are revealed in all the prints. After all, he says, whether you’re a writer, a visual artist, or a printmaker, it’s all about the tales you tell and how they help us understand each other in creative and powerful ways.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Culture: GALLERIES + MUSEUMS

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CENTRAL FINE

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917-306-1218
www.centralfine.com
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www.davidcastillogallery.com
Through August 31:
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www.garynader.com
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Emilio Sanchez, *Casita Naranja en Miami*, 1980, oil on linen, at Florida International University Frost Art Museum.

LOCUST PROJECTS

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305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
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MINDY SOLOMON GALLERY

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www.mindysolomon.com
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305-573-0658
www.thewynwoodwalls.com
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924 Lincoln Rd., 2nd Floor, Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
Through September 30:
"E-State Realisms" with various artists

THE BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.thebass.org
Through October 21:
"Perceptive Constructions" by Karen Rifas
Through September 2:
"They Are Waiting For You" by Laure Prouvost
"1 to 8: DESTEFASHIONCOLLECTION" with various artists

THE BASS: WINDOWS @ WALGREENS

7340 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
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"HOW TO: Forget More of These Kinds of Things
About You Every Day" by Geovanna Gonzalez

DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION

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www.delacruzcollection.org
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www.thefrost.fu.edu
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Through September 30:
"Deconstruction: A reordering of life, politics, and art" with Eddie Arroyo, Zachary Balber, Frida Baranek, Christopher Carter, Yanira Collado, Gonzalo Fuenmayor, Pepe Mar, Glexis Novoa, Sandra Ramos, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Jamilah Sabur, and Frances Trombly
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"Connectivity: Selections from the Collection of the Frost Art Museum" with various artists

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León Ferrari, *Dios (God)*, photo collage on cardboard, 1964, at Pérez Art Museum Miami.

religious representations of redemption and punishment. Ferrari's visual collages depict provocative imagery that challenge aesthetic forms of political intervention, trauma, violence, and religion, accompanied by drawings expressing the fluid connection between gesture and communication. In his manifesto of 1968, Ferrari declared an ever-powerful call to arms for artistic political activism: "Art is not beauty or novelty, art is effectiveness and disruption..." — *Melissa Wallen*

Melissa's Pick

Argentine artist and activist León Ferrari's "The Words of Others" confronts authoritarianism through a formalist deconstruction of language and media. At the heart of this exhibition is the artist's 1966 performance and literary collage, *Palabras Ajenas (The Words of Others)*, a defiant exercise in word association composed as a dramatic script, which had previously been staged only twice, in 1968 and 1972. Critical of Argentina's military dictatorship, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. war in Vietnam, the work is freely composed of quotations associated with various historic figures, such as President Lyndon B. Johnson, Adolf Hitler, Pope Paul VI, and God, sourced from news wires, historical texts, and the Bible. For each performance, a contemporary choir of voices reinterpret the texts, speaking to the atrocities of war, the perils of totalitarianism, and

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Through October 7:
"Tennessee Williams: Playwright and Painter"
Ongoing:
"Mosaic: Jewish Life in Florida" with various artists

LITTLE HAITI CULTURAL COMPLEX

212-260 NE 59th Terr., Miami
305-960-2969
www.littlehaiticulturalcenter.com
Through August 25:
"Forged Path: Culture, History, and Freedom" with various artists

LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535
www.lowe.miami.edu
Through August 26:
"Stone Levity: Small Sculptures" by Del Geist
Through September 23:
"DRESDEN" by Sebastian Spreng
"Painted Pixels" by Shelia Elias
"Hands and Earth: Six Perspectives on Japanese Contemporary Ceramics" with various artists

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"More Sweetly Play the Dance" by William Kentridge

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART NORTH MIAMI

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through August 4:
"Confluence/Convergence" with various artists
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Contemporary Artists in the Path of the Butterfly" with various artists

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PÉREZ ART MUSEUM MIAMI

1103 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-375-3000
www.pamm.org
Through August 12:
"The Words of Others: León Ferrari and Rhetoric in Times of War" by León Ferrari
Through September 29:
"el hombre con el hacha y otras situaciones breves" by Liliana Porter
Through September 2:
"The World's Game: Fútbol and Contemporary Art" with various artists
Through October 7:
"william cordova now's the time: narratives of southern alchemy" by William Cordova

THE MARGULIES COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
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Anselm Kiefer
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"Stranger in Paradise" by Allison Zuckerman

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www.youngarts.org
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www.wolfsonian.org
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Through August 12:
"Constructing Revolution: Soviet Propaganda Posters from Between the World Wars" with various artists
Through May 27:
"Bringing the Empire Home" by Frank Brangwyn

Compiled by *Melissa Wallen*
Send listings, jpeg images, and events information to art@biscaynetimes.com

Through September 9:
"Walter Darby Bannard: 1959-1962" curated by Gean Moreno
Through November 25:
Francis Alÿs
Through September 23:

"Infinity Is Always Less Than One" by Terry Adkins
Through October 14:
Diamond Stingily
Through November 4:
"Typhoon coming on" by Sondra Perry

/// Louise
Bourgeois



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Fly's Eye Dome (by Buckminster Fuller) in the center of Palm Court (enter at 140 NE 39th St.). www.miamidesigndistrict.net.

Design District Walkabout

The **Miami Design District** and **Arts Encounters** offer three guided tours each month that highlight the neighborhood's public art. On **Saturday, August 4**, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., Margery Gordon of Art Encounters introduces participants to some of the area's signature artworks, ending with a tour of the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami. On **Saturday, August 25**, also from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., the walking tour winds up at the Juan Carlos Maldonado Art Collection. Then on **Wednesday, August 15**, 6:20 to 8:00 p.m., the walk includes public art along Paseo Ponti through Jade Alley to the new Paradise Plaza, ending at the Museum Garage. All tours are free. Meet at the

African Dance and Drum Fest Turns Nine

Miami's Delou Africa, a nonprofit that teaches about traditional African culture through dance, drum, music, and art, hosts its annual **African Diaspora Dance and Drum Festival** this weekend, **Friday through Sunday, August 3-5**. An event for all ages (and energy levels), the fest features performances; fashion and crafts bazaars; food vendors; dance and instrumental workshops (\$10, \$20, and up); and a free children's zone offering dance and drum workshops, crafts, and storytelling. Saturday and Sunday are the big days, with Saturday's concert extravaganza, "**Journey of the Mask**," beginning at 8:00 p.m. and showcasing ensembles from Africa, the Caribbean, Miami, and elsewhere in the U.S. (\$35 general admission; \$20 for students and seniors). Head to the Little Haiti Cultural Center (212 NE 59th Terr.), and check online for the full schedule and assorted costs: www.addfff.delouafrica.org.

Behold the Flashlight Brigade

Arch Creek Park offers two **Campfire and Night Walks** through the grounds on **Friday, August 10 and 24**, 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., to teach us more about the area's nocturnal creatures. Maybe you'll learn how to identify bird calls and animal tracks; you could spy night spiders and other creatures who hunt and play after dark. Meet at the EcoCenter. Wear closed-toe shoes and bring insect

repellant, a flashlight, and marshmallows to roast at the campfire at the end of the trail. Fee: \$6. Info: 305-944-6111, park office; preregistration: rms.miamidade.gov/Saturn/Activities/Search.

Heritage Trust Takes to the Roads

Dade Heritage Trust leads a **bike ride and tour** through the historic Roads neighborhood just west of Brickell. Designed as a residential neighborhood by Mary Brickell, the triangular-shaped area features pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets and roundabouts, interesting architecture — and a surprise tour destination just for this intrepid group. Set for **Sunday, August 12**, from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m., the tour leaves from Trust headquarters (190 SE 12th Terr.) Fee: \$5 members; \$10 nonmembers; youngsters 12 and up. Rental bikes available in advance at Brickell Bikes: 305-373-3633. dadeheritagetrust.org.

Sunset Cruise to Stiltsville

What could be better than a **sunset cruise on Biscayne Bay** with a raconteur to stir your imagination and the sea breeze ruffling your hair? HistoryMiami's resident historian (and *BT* contributor), Paul George, leads this voyage to the bay's flats and Stiltsville, shoving off **Saturday, August 18**, at 6:00 p.m. from Miamarina at Bayside Marketplace (401 Biscayne Blvd.) aboard an Island

Queen Cruises vessel (snacks and drinks available for purchase aboard ship). The tour returns at 8:30. Museum members: \$50, non-members: \$60, children 12 and under: \$25. historymiami.org.

Your Guide to Urban Tactics

MDC's Museum of Art and Design brings in architect **Tony Garcia**, who heads the Miami office of Street Plans Collaborative and is recognized worldwide for his work in infrastructure for public transit, as well as pedestrian and bike traffic. His topic: "Disrupting the Order of Things: How to Get Involved and Get Things Done." He'll explain the **Tactical Urbanism movement** springing up across the country and offer guidelines for grassroots efforts to facilitate long-term sustainability through incremental change. The two-hour presentation takes place **Saturday, August 25**, starting at 4:00 p.m. in the Citizen Design Lab, second floor of Freedom Tower (600 Biscayne Blvd.). Free. calendar.mdc.edu.

Home Expo Opens a World of Want

Got the urge to re-twig your nest? Head over to the **Miami Home Design and Remodeling Show** from **Friday, August 31, to Monday, September 3 (Labor Day)**, at Mana Wynwood Convention Center (318 NW 23rd St.). Hours: Friday: 4:00 to 9:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: noon to 9:30 p.m.; Monday: noon to 7:30 p.m. The expo features ideas for



Mango Mania Strikes Again

Mango season is at its peak, and South Florida's devotion to the sweet cultivar has given rise to yet another festival in its honor — this one the inaugural **South Beach Mango Festival**, taking place **Sunday, August 5**, at Lummus Park (12th Street and Ocean Drive) in MB. Running from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., the festival celebrates the mango every which way, including a mango-eating contest for the kids, best mango recipe contest, mango prep and cooking classes, mango desserts, and mango vendors and growers. Lots of entertainment for the kids, plus live music from the band HyRyZe and singer/songwriter Johnny Rez. Tickets cost \$20. www.sobemangofest.com.

inside and out, from furniture and décor to appliances and pergolas. Look for John Gidding of TLC's *Trading Spaces*, who'll be at several events. Admission: \$10 adults, just a buck for children 11 and under. homeshows.net.

Siempre Flamenco Simmers at the Arsht

You say it's hot outside? Steamier than a performance of Miami flamenco? See for yourself at Siempre Flamenco's 13th annual **Festival de Cante Flamenco**, returning to the intimate Carnival Studio Theater of the Adrienne Arsht Center (1300 Biscayne Blvd.) **Friday, August 31, through Sunday, September 2**. The programs (two evening performances, two matinees) feature Spanish singers Macarena de Jerez, Paco del Pozo, and José Méndez, dancer José Barrios, guitarists José Luis de la Paz and José Cortes Panzekito, plus Siempre Flamenco's founding members, guitarist Fonta Paco and dancer Celia Fonta. General admission tickets: \$48. arshtcenter.org.

Compiled by *BT* contributor Dinah McNichols. Please send information and images to calendar@biscaynetimes.com.



20th Annual Afro-Cuban Dance Festival

IFE-ILE Dance Company, founded in 1998 to explore the African roots of South Florida dance traditions, presents its annual **Afro-Cuban Dance Festival** on **Friday, August 17**. The program begins at 8:00 p.m. at Miami Dade College's Koubek Center (2705 SW 3rd St.), and features traditional and contemporary styles of Afro-Cuban dance, as well as performances of rumba, salsa, and ritual "spirit" dances. Tickets \$20; discounts available. Check www.ife-ile.org to view other events, like the parade at Domino Park in Little Havana, dance workshops, and a children's camp, offered in the days preceding the performance. ife-ile.org/festival/festival.

Biscayne Boulevard Boomed in the 1950s

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

By Paul George
BT Contributor

As noted in June's "Picture Story," Biscayne Boulevard is booming, especially in Miami's Upper Eastside, with revitalized motels, new restaurants, markets, and other businesses.

Contributing to the sharp upswing in its fortunes has been the presence of several nearby historic districts, including the MiMo/Biscayne Historic District and the investments streaming into it. Established in 2006, the MiMo Historic District brackets the Boulevard from NE 50th Street to NE 77th Street.

The historic district of today resulted from the sharp post-World War II rise in prosperity and the proliferation of cars. These developments prompted a shift in focus, away from the commercial and

retail properties along the Boulevard toward new tourist motels that would line a main entryway into Miami. The district contained more than 20 motels from the late-1940s through the mid-1950s.

The evolving style for many of those new motels was branded Miami Modern or MiMo, a term coined by South Floridians Randall Robinson and Teri D'Amico, to describe the architecture that flourished throughout the area and in other parts of the country for some 20 years after World War II.

Elements of this style, reflective of a booming national economy and a rising optimism following nearly two decades of economic depression and war, include futuristic designs, Space Age imagery, neon, pylons, metal grilles, brise-soleils, decorative railings, walls of glass, cantilever, striking masonry sculptures, cheese holes,

boomerangs, textured surfaces, and other elements.

Among the district's buildings that best represent the MiMo style is the Vagabond Hotel (its current owner calls the Vagabond a hotel "because it has more amenities than a motel, like a pool") at 7301 Biscayne Blvd. Designed in 1953 by architect Robert Swartburg, whose other works include the Delano Hotel and the original Miami Beach Convention Center, the 45-room Vagabond, as Randall Robinson has noted, includes a star-spangled pylon, sea nymphs, and a triple Venus on the half shell flanked by dolphins. After an early period of success, the Vagabond, reflecting the sharp decline of the Boulevard, fell on hard times.



The Vagabond is an outstanding example of the exuberant Miami Modern architectural style.

Photo courtesy of HistoryMiami, 1981-235-11959-2

Its demolition was a real prospect before its purchase in 2012 by Avra Jain, who has restored many historic properties. After expenditures of \$6 million, the hotel reopened in 2014 and is considered one of the most important elements of a historic district that has gained worldwide renown.

Paul George is historian at HistoryMiami Museum. To order a copy of this photo, contact HistoryMiami archives manager Ashley Trujillo at 305-375-1623, atrujillo@historymiami.org.

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Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Gaining a Guilty Conscience?

7500 Block of NE 3rd Avenue

Victim came home and found a back window that was shattered. The mystery perpetrator has gone through her closets and taken a bunch of clothes. The person also took food from a shelf. However, the items didn't leave the property — they were all left in the back yard.

If It Sounds Too Good to Be True...

3400 Block NE 1st Avenue

Our victim responded to an e-mail ad opportunity. It was a dog-sitting website, and she was asked randomly to care for two dogs. All correspondence was done by e-mail. In lieu of deleting the e-mail as spam, our victim needed a break with her finances. She was sent a check for \$2,500 as an advance payment to care

for the pooches. She deposited it and paid her bills (meaning, before it cleared), when her bank told her that the check was worthless and came from a fraudulent account. If only dog sitting paid that much and unsolicited e-mails were legit moneymakers.

The Power of Sound

401 Biscayne Blvd.

The owner of a T-Mobile store observed a man whom he didn't know jump a fence and enter the storage room. The intruder began to grab items and place them in a bag. This was all caught on CCTV. So the store alarm was turned on, startling the thief, who then jumped back over the fence, emptyhanded.

Not Thinking It Through

1400 Block of NE 2nd Avenue



Man entered a credit union with his ID and a \$400 check he wanted cashed. The teller immediately realized that something was off, as evidenced by the obvious alteration to the check, poorly done. The check actually belonged to another customer, who was contacted. She'd apparently dropped the check, made

out to TJ Maxx for \$20, into a mailbox. The teller kept the man waiting, and a detective showed up and questioned him. The man only offered that a local named Chino had given him this check, and that Chino had offered to split the \$400 with him. He was promptly arrested, having brutally failed at altering the check.

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5900 Block of NE 6th Avenue

You come home and are exhausted. The AC barely works. The kitchen window is open. So you crash for a bit, too tired (and neglectful) to get up off the living room sofa and lock the kitchen window. I mean, they'll clearly see someone is home, right? They did, and when he woke up, his wallet and cell phone were gone. It was a perfect and painless score for the burglar. No arrests have been made. Good luck napping now.

It's Her Ongoing Nightmare

100 Block of NE 59 Terrace

Over the past several months, mystery burglars have repeatedly victimized the same homeowner. In this latest incident, three bags of shingles were taken from the area where she usually parks her car. She told police that unknown people have been entering her property, as well as entering her home. There are no signs of forced entry, and she is not sure how they are entering, as there is a large gate around the property. The intruders have also vandalized her home. The investigation continues.

Who to Call? Your Lawyer, Your Bank, or 911?

100 NE 54th St.

When returning to his business, a man found the front lock smashed and the door opened. The person who did this also ransacked the place. The victim did not call 911 and instead secured the door himself. He had an appointment with his lawyer, so he called him to let him know he'd be running late. This didn't play well with his attorney, who told him he needed to go to the bank, as that took priority over calling 911. When he finally did call the police, it was to no avail, as the scene was contaminated and there were no security cameras. Lawyer still got paid for his services.

Bartender's Bad Luck

100 Block of NE 11th Street

This bartender had placed \$2000 on the counter and was distracted for less than five seconds, just enough time for a man to take that money and try to walk out. He handed off some of the cash, according to surveillance video, to another man, who was not apprehended. But he was, and was held for police. Only

\$400 was returned, much to the chagrin of the bartender. The man did admit to police that he'd taken it but added that he'd never been arrested before and asked the police to let him go, based on that good record. They dropped him off at the county jail.

Letting Go Will Cost You

100 Block of NE 11th Street

At this dance club, a woman danced all night, showing remarkable stamina, until around 5:00 a.m., at which time she decided to call it a night...or a morning. Unbeknownst to her, someone had taken a cell phone from the bag she was wearing on her shoulder. There is a flap that hangs down that the thief got into. Calls made to the number were fruitless, as the phone was turned off. Calls made to the club the next day to determine if it was found went unreturned.

Not Too Neighborly

500 Block of NE 67th Street

This victim called the police to report his security camera had been stolen. Someone had forcefully removed the

camera from above his door. Also, his garden was vandalized, and plants had been ripped out of the ground. He believes his neighbor is responsible, as they have had an ongoing dispute and the camera was part of it. No arrests made, so the saga continues.

Clean Hands, Dirty Business

100 Block of NE 39th Street

Taking a bathroom break, an employee washed his hands in the sink, obeying those signs on how all employees must do this before returning to work. He'd taken off a gold watch as he did so. He left the bathroom and went back to the store where he worked. It took him an hour to realize he was missing his watch. Upon his return to the bathroom, the watch was nowhere to be found. He contacted mall security so he could view the surveillance tapes but he was told he had to file a police report. The report made sure to note that there is no surveillance inside the actual bathroom. Well, that is a relief. The watch has not yet been found.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Oasis of Amenities

Margaret Pace Park has a view and much more

By **Janet Goodman**
BT Contributor

Between Biscayne Bay and a recent flurry of “hot” luxury condo construction in the Omni/Edgewater neighborhood of Miami is a valuable slice of real estate that will never be developed: Margaret Pace Park.

This eight-acre oasis, located at 1745 N. Bayshore Dr., boasts 1500 feet of waterfront and a slew of amenities that keep area residents returning. Tennis, basketball, and beach volleyball courts, picnic spots, a children’s playground, a bay walk, exercise equipment, and a long-needed fenced-in dog park are thoughtfully designed without obstructing large open greenspaces, allowing in breezes and viewing out over Biscayne Bay, east toward Miami Beach.

On the park’s southern border is the historic Miami Woman’s Club building, whose vice president in the 1950s — Margaret Pace — led the lawsuit to stop dredging land from the bay for private development next door. The City of Miami purchased this land for \$209,000 in 1966 to create Coral Park, later named Margaret Pace Park.

A major \$4 million overhaul of the park took place in 2003. In 2014, due to massive construction projects bringing new condominium towers nearby, the Omni Community Redevelopment Agency (Omni CRA) provided \$4 million

in funds to reconstruct North Bayshore Drive. New sidewalks, streetlights, and land- and streetscaping improved the route from the towers to the park. (Quantum on the Bay, Bay Parc, Opera Tower, Paramount Bay, and the Doubletree Grand are some of the area’s high-rises.)

That same year, \$470,000 of Omni CRA funding improved the park’s playground with new fencing, shade structures, and a Pour-in-Place safety floor surface, and paid for improvements in the adult Vita course exercise equipment area. By 2015, the much-anticipated fenced dog park was designed and constructed with \$400,000 of Omni CRA money.

There are multiple entrances to Margaret Pace Park, including the main plaza steps on N. Bayshore Drive near the restroom building. In 2017 an art piece titled *Ara Pacis*, meaning *Altar of Peace*, was erected here. Colombian sculptor William Botero donated the installation made from bronze alloy castings of nearly 8000 bullet casings collected from around the world as a tribute to victims of gun violence.

Other park sculptures provide photo opportunities and inspiration: three striking thrones designed by students from the New World School of the Arts with assistance from elders representing Miami’s Jewish, Hispanic, and African-American heritages.



BT photos by Janet Goodman

To the west, a wall of towering condominiums, to the east, Biscayne Bay.



Among the parks many amenities are regulation beach volleyball courts — a rarity.

Park amenities are connected by concrete footpaths that flow into the long scenic bay walk. Sabal and coconut palms, and sea grape are numerous, with occasional flowering trees, such as royal poinciana and silk floss. Grass and landscaping were neatly maintained when the *BT* visited in late June.

Picnic areas with tables and grills are stationed along perimeters but never block the water view, making for some relaxing lunches. King tides and bay surges are deterred from coming through the park by its built-up elevation.

According to Stephanie Severino, City of Miami deputy director of the Office of Communications, there are no plans to build a seawall at the park;



One of three iconic thrones representing the heritages of Miami’s Jewish, Hispanic, and African-American communities.

only coral limestone boulders along the shoreline provide some barrier to the bay. In an e-mail exchange with the *BT*, Severino notes that the park lost several

MARGARET PACE PARK

Park Rating

1745 N. Bayshore Dr.
Miami, FL 33132
305-350-7938
Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
Picnic tables: Yes
Barbecues: Yes
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: Yes
Basketball court: Yes
Night lighting: Yes
Fenced-in dog park: Yes
Playground: Yes

trees during Hurricane Irma and several more trees had to be righted and braced. Lighting fixtures suffered some other wind damage. The only park repairs now slated will be to existing sidewalks.

In recent years, a lot of media attention had been given to the need for a fenced-in dog section at Margaret Pace Park, which will celebrate its three-year anniversary this September.

Tensions grew when parkgoers who had protested off-leash dogs and their unattended excrement were pitted against local dog owners who wanted their pets to run and exercise unfettered. The Biscayne Neighborhoods Association (BNA), a civic advocacy group, fought for policing of the park, and downtown police enforced leash laws by issuing about 40 citations at \$50 a pop, to violating dog owners.

A dog running loose in the park was stabbed by a frustrated park visitor, while other people were harassed after telling dog owners to leash up. A petition drive garnered more than 400 signatures of those locals endorsing a fenced-in dog section as a solution to the issue.

The dog park is approximately one-half acre in size, divided into separate

small- and large-dog sections. Each section has two pet waste stations (there are now ten stations throughout the park), a human/canine water fountain, and benches. Young oak trees with rubberized and glued-in mulch will someday provide shade, and doggie fire hydrants are popular marking spots.

A metal stylized dog sculpture named Pacer stands guard in the large dog section. What's different here from other dog parks is the artificial turf surfacing of the entire 20,000 square feet. A SYNLaw Pet Premium grass was selected and has held up nicely. It is easy to maintain and heat resistant, and rainwater drains quickly.

Edgewater resident Otis Mallry comes to the park every day with his ten-year-old Shih Tzu, Jazz. He used to live in South Beach and take his dog to Flamingo Park



Picnic areas with tables and grills are stationed along perimeters but never block the water views.



The dog park, which resolved some serious conflicts over pets, will celebrate its third anniversary next month.

but prefers Margaret Pace Park. "I like the artificial turf here because it never gets flooded or even just muddy," says Mallry.

Samantha Tini lives several blocks away and enjoys bringing her 18-month-old male terrier-mix, Kumo, to the park but would rather have natural grass for her dog. She says she often has trouble finding a parking space near the park.

Mallry notes that on-street paid parking is discounted for Miami residents, but you need to call the posted

Miami Parking Authority number to register. Lack of parking in the vicinity is Margaret Pace Park's biggest downside.

This reviewer had to travel blocks away to find a spot in the Publix free parking garage on Biscayne Boulevard. But nearby residents who visit the park can simply walk there. It would have been a shame if the city ate up some of this precious greenery just for vehicles.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Butterflies on the Brink

Pollinator “pets” can make a comeback in Miami-Dade

By Janet Goodman
BT Contributor

Is it a stretch to call insect pollinators pets? Many Florida municipalities argued as much before 2012, when the state signed into law the Beekeepers Protection Act. That law supersedes county and municipal regulations, and allows residents to maintain bee hives on non-agricultural properties. Local governments had previously argued that 40,000 bees in a hive were 40,000 pets, exceeding residential pet limit codes.

Butterflies are also essential pollinators that help gardens grow. I recently encouraged their presence in my backyard by planting native host plants, on which certain species will lay eggs that develop into caterpillars. These “cats” feed on host plant leaves and eventually form chrysalises from which butterflies emerge.

While there are no pet-limit codes concerning butterflies on residential properties, these insects can bring as much joy as more traditional furry, feathered, or scaly companions.

The goal of local non-profit Bound by Beauty (boundbybeauty.org) is to change how people interact with nature through education about butterflies. Miami Shores resident Mary Benton is one of the founders, and she and her organization have been involved in the planning and planting of dozens of residential butterfly gardens. Volunteers created butterfly-friendly environments at several schools and a native pine rockland garden at Miami Shores Community Church.

At Plaza 98, the pop-up public space on NE 98th Street just off NE 2nd Avenue in the Shores, BBB planted a variety of nectar and host plants. Benton tells the *BT*: “Within a couple of days, monarchs had already laid eggs on the milkweed, and atalas on the coontie.” Some of the plaza plants didn’t survive the spring drought, but the coontie — host plant for the atalas — is currently covered in caterpillars.

Calusa, Tequesta, and Seminole Indians made a bread from the roots of the coontie. By the 1930s, coontie numbers were decimated by local mills that overharvested the plant for starch products, and atala butterflies were considered extinct. But in 1979, one small colony was discovered on Key Biscayne.

Urban replanting of coontie, as well as atala caterpillar relocation throughout Miami-Dade, has encouraged atala numbers to grow and spread. Today the blue, black, and orange butterfly is back from the brink.

In December 2017, Bound by Beauty began a Foster Garden program. “We rescued 861 atala caterpillars and found foster gardens for 1145,” says Benton. “Our most recent foster garden is Vizcaya, which warmly welcomed 100 caterpillars rescued from a garden in Miami Shores.”

With coontie ready in my garden, Benton gave me nine reddish-brown, yellow-spotted atala cats to foster. I watched them form pupae and witnessed the miracle of an emerging butterfly. So far, three atalas call my garden home and have laid clutches totaling 15 eggs on fresh green coontie fronds.

Other South Florida butterflies are in trouble, too. Benton notes that the loss of

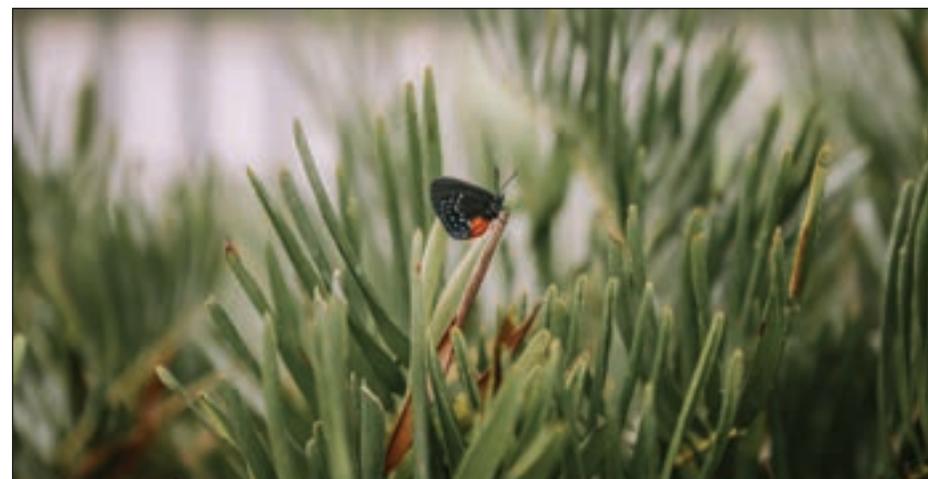


Photo by Maria Font

Atala butterflies like this were brought back from near extinction.

native habitat has endangered the Schaus swallowtail, the Miami blue, Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak, and Florida leafwing butterflies. She encourages people to plant pineland croton, which is the host plant for Bartrams and leafwings, “in hopes we can bring them back, as has been done with the atala.” Pesticides, droughts, and storms also affect their numbers.

“Giant swallowtails almost disappeared in Florida as a result of the citrus canker eradication effort, which nearly wiped out their host plants,” says Benton. “Zebra butterflies are starting to rebound after Hurricane Irma last fall.” Many of her own host plants are kept in pots, and she was able to rescue some caterpillars by bringing them indoors during the storm.

Walking through Benton’s garden is a dreamlike experience. A flurry of color surrounds you as you marvel at her resident monarchs, zebras, and atalas, as well as a number of other species, like Gulf fritillaries, Julias, and giant swallowtails. According to Benton, “I have seen 22 different species of butterflies in my garden.”

Benton would like to see the county stop spraying for mosquitoes, as it kills beneficial insects like pollinators and

reduces insect food for birds. “I’d also like to see more urban gardeners creating wildlife sanctuaries and healthy green corridors between gardens that are chemical-free, Benton continues. “The average person can avoid purchasing nectar and host plants that have been treated with neonicotinoids, a systemic pesticide that kills any creature that feasts on the plant. They can replace thirsty sod with drought-tolerant natives that attract pollinators. Even condo dwellers can work together to create pollinator habitats in their common areas.”

Many weeds, such as Spanish needle, can be left in gardens, as they provide nectar for zebras and Gulf fritillaries.

Benton quotes the North American Butterfly Association: “If we can save the butterflies, we might be able to save ourselves.” She points out that Bound by Beauty believes everyone can make a difference by creating butterfly habitats. “Butterfly gardens are magical, healing, transformative places,” she says. “Can you imagine if Miami Shores became known as the Butterfly Village?”

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Write Your Mother!

The many life lessons of letter

By **Stuart Sheldon**
BT Contributor

I sent the postcard shown here to my grandparents from summer camp when I was nine. They loved it so much, they kept it forever. I see why. Any day that includes archery, riflery, kickball, softball, bingo, and a cookout is one worth writing about.

When was the last time you received a hand-written letter? Or more important, when did you last write one? I'm not talking about a long dump-your-heart-out scenario, though I'm all for that. A mere thank-you note can be a game-changer for the recipient. There's that wonderful moment of anticipation as you open the envelope. And then you're holding the very paper that someone far away poured his or her contemplations into?

Here's a question. You receive a letter and an e-mail on the same day. Both say the exact same thing. Which touches you more, and which feels more sincere? When was the last time your e-mail smelled like your lover on the other end? The power of this analogue, sensual connection has been studied at length.

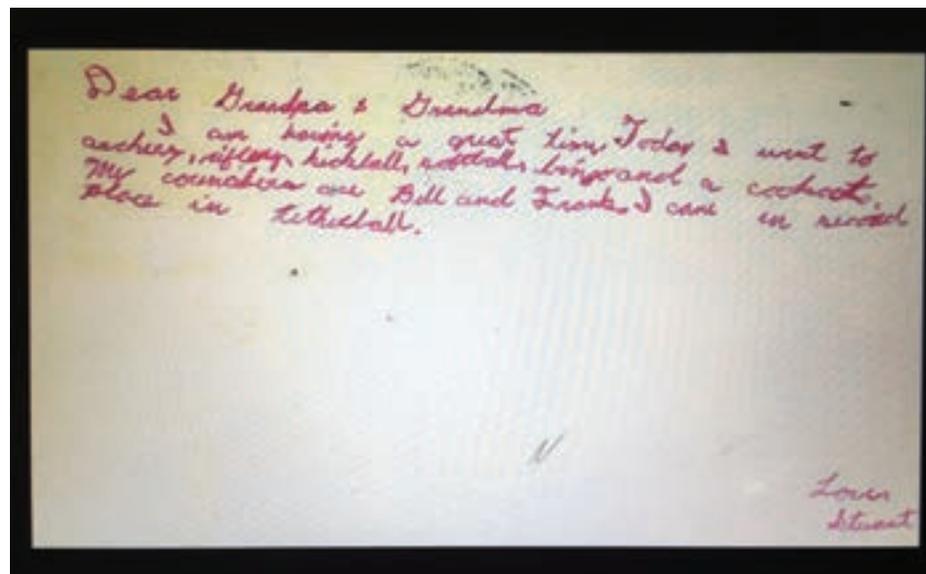
Author John Naisbitt first explored the concept of high-tech versus high touch in his 1982 bestseller, *Mega-trends*. He theorized that in a world of

increasing technology, people long for personal, human contact. I know this to be true, and go out of my way to have lunch regularly with people I admire, instead of merely pinging them digitally. I need the eye contact and the skin-to-skin of a good hug. I cherish any afternoon where I fall asleep on the couch with an old-fashioned book on my chest as opposed to a reading device. And my heart sings any time my kids (or anyone) actually make me a card for any occasion, bonus if there's a drawing included.

In our ever more digital universe, writing a letter is such an easy way to affirm and enhance our most cherished relationships. Surprise someone with a note today, and see what happens. Write your mom or your favorite uncle for no particular reason. Or drop a thank-you note to the neighbor who helped you move.

One lesson I took from my years in finance was to always write a thank-you note after each meeting, basically acknowledging someone for taking time out of his or her busy day to hear me out. I'm confident that in a field where my prospective clients had many choices, that simple act of kindness helped me stand out in the crowd. All for under 50 cents. Talk about money well spent.

There are also hidden life lessons in the physical writing of a note. My



mother showed me how to turn written mistakes into little pictures within the body of the letter, so that my scratched-out comma became a little happy lion face or a crescent moon punctuating my musings. The greater message here was that any situation can be salvaged with a bit of creativity, so don't lose heart. This has served me very well as an artist.

Writing a letter also brings out the eagle-eye editor in us all, for we often must economize our thoughts into a limited space. This forces us to think twice about what we wish to convey to a friend or loved one, a process that literally makes us more thoughtful.

In today's sordid and bitter world, a good letter is one antidote to mend tears in our social fabric. Not only does it keep us connected across distances that seem ever farther these days, it deepens the bonds we often take for granted. And puts an exclamation point on the love we feel for those closest to us. It doesn't even have to be mailed. Leave a note for your husband or wife on the kitchen table tomorrow — Honey, I know I should say it more.

So let me be clear. I. LOVE. YOU... and I'll prove it later.

My ten-year-old son left for summer camp this morning. I'm sure he will feel unduly burdened by writing one letter a week (for three weeks, do the math). But I hope he'll take a few extra moments to ponder his day, the people he spoke with, the funny joke he heard, the triumphs, and failures. And I hope he'll experience a moment of emotion in that reflection. Optimally, that emotion will be pride or delight. But even if it is shame or rage, he'll be taking stock of himself, and that is what matters.

I hope my son shares the things he did, as I did with my grandparents. Perhaps he'll best his old man and finish first in tetherball. More important, I hope he shares a taste of the particular emotion that made his day meaningful. That's a good letter.

Stuart Sheldon is an artist, author, and Miami native. Follow him on Facebook and Instagram @stuart_sheldon and subscribe to his blog at FancyNasty.us.

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Blooms for a High-Rise Balcony

Air plants are easy to move during storm prep

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

A number of years ago, I was asked to consult on creating a bougainvillea wall of foliage on a balcony at a large new condominium. I didn't think it would be practical but went mainly to see this new condo in all its glass-enclosed splendor. The unit's owner wanted the foliage and color to block the view into her home from condos in nearby buildings.

The wind on her balcony, more than 200 feet above grade, was impressive and blasting. Sure, there was plenty of sunlight during the day but any soft foliage on a typical windy day would get shredded, and plants not securely attached would likely be blown off in a high-wind event. It was a shame, but what this potential client wanted wasn't going to work, no matter how much money she spent.

I often look up at the thousands of new-built empty balconies and think what a shame, no horticultural curiosity here — but what could you grow on these stark skyboxes? Well, what kinds of plants do grow in dry (xeric), windy conditions?

During my many travels to tropical climes, I've seen powerlines and communication towers hosting different species of bromeliads. Now, these aren't your typical large-leafed pineapple types of bromeliad. Nor do they serve as hosts to mosquito larvae, since they don't

collect water in the axils of their foliage.

But like most, if not all epiphytic (i.e., they grow on other plants) bromeliads, they have specialized structures on the surface of their foliage called trichomes. These are tiny, water-absorbing scales that help the plant survive in a soil-less environment; they take in atmospheric moisture and shield the plant from excessive solar radiation. This is what produces that silver-white fluff on the foliage of many bromeliad species. You'll notice that some species have more of the white fluffy stuff on their foliage when they're in more sunlight. Also notice that some bromeliad species have thick succulent leaves, too.

The accompanying photo shows a group of xeric bromeliads, *Tillandsia caput-medusae*, newly planted onto the trunk of a small tree using zip ties. The name of this species, or specific epithet, refers to the head of Medusa, a pretty cool name considering the way the foliage contorts and twists. This is one of the many bromeliad species that grow in dry conditions that you can propagate on your sunny balcony.

I'd attached these bromeliads on a tree trunk growing in a sunny area at Jungle Island when we opened and had lots of sunlight underneath the newly planted tree canopy. These *Tillandsia* did quite well and even started growing new plants at the base of the older mother plants as they began to die after flowering. But the area eventually got too



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

This *Tillandsia* is great to grow on your balcony.

shady, and the plants died. They don't grow well in shaded conditions. They need the bright light like you have on a sunlit balcony.

These "air plants" can be easily attached to a piece of dried wood or cork using zip ties or even superglue for the smaller ones. Then the sections can be attached to a stiff wire frame that is attached to your wall. They can be sprayed with water several times a week at low light times, like early morning or evening. No fertilizer is necessary because the trichomes absorb atmospheric nutrients from rainwater or mist.

Many *Tillandsia* species are quite small and can fit in the palm of your hand. Some, like *Tillandsia ionantha*, put on a striking show of color when they bloom. This color can last a couple of months. This bromeliad will grow into a good-sized clump and can be hung from a wire in an open area.

Some species have fragrant blooms at night, so when yours do bloom, bring them inside at nighttime and enjoy the fragrance. I've grown different varieties of *Tillandsia mallemonii* for years, and

have found them to be great conversation pieces with friends who enjoyed the distinct fragrance. I grew a clump of these the size of a dinner plate on the trunk of a coconut palm next to the entrance of my old house. You couldn't miss it when they were in bloom. Some fragrant species that are easy to grow include *Tillandsia duratii*, *T. crocta*, and *T. purpurea*, but there are many more as well.

Grow these bromeliads on panels or as hanging plants that you can take inside when you know a storm is coming. That way they won't blow off your balcony and can be put back outside after the winds pass. Since they don't need soil or a similar growing medium, they are clean and won't make a mess when you move them.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Public Lands Aren't for Sale

Freedom Park is a misnomer for developers' cash cow

By Blanca Mesa
BT Contributor

“We have been too efficient at destruction; we have left our souls too little space to breathe in. Every green natural place we save saves a fragment of our sanity and gives us a little more hope that we have a future.” — novelist and environmentalist Wallace Stegner, 1991.

A vast green pastoral space of hills and cool blue lakes unfolds to the east as you drive along Le Jeune Road near Miami International Airport. That's the 130-acre Melreese Golf Course. A tourist visiting for the first time might think Miami is a green city, that it values its parks and greenspaces. In reality, this golf course and a few old cemeteries are all that many urban neighborhoods have left for open greenspace. And now, even they are threatened with concrete and asphalt.

“In our neighborhoods, we don't have those views,” says Marta Zayas, a community activist and public parks advocate in Little Havana. Most of the city's neighborhood public parks contain little more than basketball courts and baseball diamonds or soccer fields, Zayas explains. “But I want nature. We also need parks that are a reflection of nature.”

The Melreese golf course public parkland is being coveted by developers for a 25,000-seat soccer stadium and a retail, office, and entertainment complex that would include a 750-room hotel. The project, dubbed Miami Freedom Park, would sprawl over 73 acres of public parkland.

While some city officials quibble over rent payments and terms of a 99-year lease for this valuable piece of public land, they are missing the bigger picture: How can Miami give up any greenspace to developers?

This crowded city of concrete has no place to breathe. We need our open greenspaces under blue skies. We need all of Melreese to stay green and available for restoration as a great public park.

At a time when Miami faces serious challenges posed by climate change, sea level rise, and flooding, green areas like Melreese can play an important role in resilience and sustainability.

Great cities around the world use greenspaces to help adjust to, and buttress against, the challenges of climate change. It's critical to maintain what open land the city has, including coastal areas, the riverfront, and on islands like Virginia Key and Watson Island.

Greenspaces are where trees are planted, water is collected, and native habitats are restored. Preserving and restoring these settings also helps wildlife survive.

“If city commissioners vote to allow the Mas/Beckham proposal to go forward, it will be another indicator that all 140 City of Miami parks are for sale,” warned Peter Ehrlich, an Urban Environment League (UEL) board member who also sits on the City of Miami's Virginia Key Advisory Board. The UEL passed a resolution in early July urging city officials to reject the Melreese deal, but on July 18, the Miami City Commission decided to put the project on the November ballot for voters to decide.



Courtesy of Golf Digest

Melreese Golf Course today.

“Elected officials should show respect for every park, for every open greenspace — and frankly, they should show respect for every blade of grass,” he added.

Yet it may come to that — we may be forced to fight for the last blade of grass.

It wasn't always this way. The former Mayor of Miami, Xavier Suarez, now a Miami-Dade County Commissioner, assured the protection of Virginia Key's mangrove forests in the 1990s when he helped create the 700-acre Sadowski Critical Wildlife Area (CWA) on Virginia Key. It's a wildlife refuge for endangered and threatened marine and bird species, and a symbol of ecological caretaking.

Last November residents approved the Miami Forever bond issue to help pay for climate change resiliency. Selling off Melreese is a betrayal of the trust we placed in city officials to create a green city, and to our commitment to using green infrastructure to make our community sustainable.

Residents need to get organized and speak up because, in this town, silence

is viewed as acceptance; and a willingness to negotiate is taken as a license to commit a land grab.

In the end, it may require a referendum to assure protection of public park spaces, says Zayas. Legislation would prohibit public officials from leasing or selling public parklands. Now, that is a voter referendum I think all residents should support.

With this column, I say goodbye to “Going Green” and to Miami. I am venturing west to the Pacific Coast. It has been a great experience writing for *Biscayne Times*, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Miamians who are working to raise awareness about our precious natural world. They are using everything within their power — from art to activism — to make a difference. Keep it up!

You can follow me at @blancamesa as I continue to write about ecology, urban planning, and how to save the world for other species.

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Battle of the Sauvignon Blancs

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

By **Jacqueline Coleman**
BT Contributor

Hello, August! The month when we're couch-bound due to oppressive heat and afternoon downpours, yet we're not yet at the official start of football season. If you're counting reasons to justify your time in front of the tube, consider this: As we gear up for football, let's get our competitive (grape) juices flowing a little early with a rivalry hotter than UM vs. FSU.

How about California versus New Zealand... Sauvignon Blancs, that is.

All New World Sauvignon Blanc fanatics have an opinion on this one, and usually it draws a pretty good discussion. Both regions produce fruit-forward wines of exceptional quality, but there are distinct differences that can turn friends into foes at the dinner table.

What is it about this single varietal that expresses so differently in each place?

Let's start with New Zealand, where Sauvignon Blanc is one of the main varietals. Many Team New Zealand zealots are drawn to this version of the varietal because of the intense grapefruit and lush tropical fruit flavors mixed with herbaceous green qualities. Delightfully refreshing, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is often characterized as exuberant and intense.

In California, Sauv Blanc can be expressed in a few different ways, including as its alter ego, Fumé Blanc. Usually

when made in this region, Sauvignon Blanc has a more dominant citrus or green apple burst of flavor, and is slightly mellower when it comes to the tropical fruit than its Kiwi cousins. When produced in the Fumé Blanc style, Sauvignon Blanc may even be aged in oak; the Fumé Blanc designation doesn't always mean the wine has seen oak — simply that it's made in a drier "Loire" style.

Here's a selection of economical Sauvignon Blancs that may help you decide which one is your winner.

One of the favorites from Team New Zealand is the **2017 Oyster Bay**. This wine comes across just as you'd expect, with a big pop of grapefruit, gooseberry, pineapple, and all the tropical fruit flavor you love on the nose. A little more citrusy on the palate complemented by mild acidity. On the second glass, you'll get some of that grassy green melon that pairs so well with goat cheese.

For something a little lighter, try the **2017 Governors Bay** from Marlborough. Definitely more of that melon salad on the nose and a bit more acidity in this wine. I taste a hint of orange deep on the back of my tongue but notice a shorter finish than with the first wine.

The **2017 Ponga** New Zealand Sauv Blanc is truly an enjoyable wine. Bright and crisp with melon and dried apricot on the nose. Soft peachy tones dance around the palate, with a fresh and fruitier finish. A little less dry than the previous two wines, this wine is a

perfect summertime salad accompaniment.

I find the **2017 Brancott Estate** Sauvignon Blanc to be the most unusual of the New Zealand grouping. This pungent wine fits the more intense designation given to some Sauvignon Blancs. With sharp citrus flavors, it's a bit like a punch of fruit on the nose. A bolder, more full-flavored palate, it would pair better with heavier foods.

Much to my surprise as a longtime member of Team New Zealand, I really enjoyed the three California Sauvignon Blancs. The **2016 Justin** Sauvignon Blanc from the Central Coast region of California is a beautiful fuller-bodied wine with crisp green apple on the nose and a refreshing lemon-citrus flavor on the palate. Full of flavor, refreshing, and balanced, Justin is the new go-to Sauvignon Blanc on my list.

For more of a typical California wine experience, try the **2016 Dry Creek Vineyard Fumé Blanc**, out of Sonoma County. This wine is made in the dry "Loire" style, as Fumé Blanc designates, but it is not oaked. A big green apple bomb on the nose and

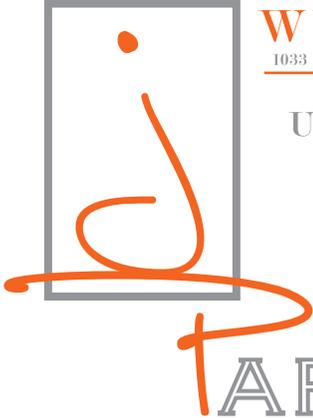
palate, the Dry Creek is much bolder than those from New Zealand. Overall, an enjoyable wine.

Another favorite is the **2016 Hess Select**. The lightest nose of Team California wines, this wine surprises with a bit of honey on the palate. I'd describe the flavors of the nose and palate to lean heavy on ripe green apple, but a slight mix of grapefruit peeks in, along with a quick lemon zest on the tongue. Hess is a solid brand that holds up well in this Sauvignon Blanc competition.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



Governors Bay Sauvignon Blanc is \$12.49, Justin is \$13.99, Dry Creek Vineyards Fumé Blanc is \$11.29, and Oyster Bay is \$9.97 at the North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270). Whole Foods Market in North Miami (305-892-5505) carries the Hess Select Sauvignon Blanc for \$11.99, and the Ponga for \$10.99 until August 28. Publix at Biscayne and 18th (305-358-3433) has the Brancott Estate Sauvignon Blanc for \$9.25.



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Make the Most of Miami Spice

Food news we know you can use

By **Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin**
BT Contributors

It's August, and you know what that means: Miami Spice is in full effect. South Florida foodies have tons of choices this year, with more than 200 restaurants participating in the two-month event.

Until September 30, guests can enjoy discounted three-course meals at some of Miami's top restaurants. Previously out-of-your-budget restaurants are suddenly affordable, as these eateries try to fill seats during the city's slow season.

Here's the thing, though: How do you make the most of these limited-time offers? There's only so much you can eat in such a short period. That's why we have some recommendations that should help you maximize your dollars during Miami Spice.

Our first recommendation: Be flexible. With big names like **Blue Collar** (6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366) and **La Centrale** (601 S. Miami Ave.) on this year's list, the fight for dinner reservations is fierce. If your preferred venue is too busy during dinner, try to visit for lunch or even brunch (if it's available). You're less likely to encounter crowds during these times, and you'll spend \$23 versus \$39 — a significant savings.

During these two months, you should also try something new. It's great that your favorite restaurant is participating in Miami Spice again, but keep your palate

on its toes with additions like **Alter** (223 NW 23rd St., 305-573-5996), which is offering Miami Spice dinner for the first time; it only offered lunch back in 2016. Here's your chance to try the restaurant's beloved blue crab shumai or to check out any of the other restaurants on the list without breaking the bank. You might even discover a new neighborhood.

One final disclaimer: Always call the place in advance. We can't stress enough how often these menus can change. While the official Miami Spice website does a great job at capturing these changes, it doesn't hurt to double-check; something is bound to fall through the cracks.

OPENINGS

Miami Spice may be the biggest news right now, but it's not the only news. The city has also welcomed a wave of new eateries that deserve your attention, regardless of their Miami Spice participation.

Kimpton EPIC Hotel has transformed part of its rooftop into a pop-up restaurant for the rest of summer. Called **EPIC Pop-Up** (270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-351-7403), the temporary establishment allows executive chef Alex Olivier to flex his culinary muscles and cook some upscale Mediterranean cuisine. The menu features both small plates and large bites like stuffed dates, Serrano ham, Spanish suckling pig, and Spanish-style prawns. For cocktails, the pop-up



Courtesy of La Centrale

La Centrale is new on the Miami Spice list.

focuses on large-format drinks like shareable punches that are sure to get the party started.

Another recent highlight is **Sette Osteria** (2103 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-8282), a Washington, D.C., transplant that opened quietly on the southern end of Wynwood. Classic pastas like cacio e pepe and fettuccine alla Bolognese are just a taste of the extensive menu, which also includes pizzas, flatbreads, calzones, and other Italian fare that would make a low-carb dieter balk.

On the other side of town, **Nothing Bundt Cakes** (15400 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 112, 305-974-4536) is now open in Aventura as of Wednesday, August 1. The bakery is celebrating with several community events, including an August 4 promotion of free "bundtlets" (mini bundt cakes) for a year for the first 50 guests. At Nothing Bundt Cakes, customers can pop into the shop to order and pick up everything from bite-sized bundt cakes ("bundtinis") to bundtlet towers.

The next few months will also hold some fun fare for diners. We're most excited for **Guy & the Bird** (17070 W.

Dixie Hwy.), which will bring yakitori and rotisserie offerings to North Miami Beach in September. Details are sparse at the moment, but we're confident the nine-foot yakitori grill will be put to good use by chef and owner Roy Starobinsky, who is also behind the popular local restaurant Lettuce & Tomato.

CLOSINGS

Last month, Brickell said goodbye to a familiar face: **Rosa Mexicano**. The Mexican restaurant, which has occupied the ground floor of Mary Brickell Village for more than a decade, closed abruptly. Owners cite lease expiration as the reason. Fans will now have to travel to the Lincoln Road outpost for that famous tableside guac.

Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin are co-founders of Miami Food Pug, an award-winning South Florida food blog that fuses the couple's love of dogs and food.

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 274

Restaurant listings for the BT Dining Guide are written by Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin of Miami Food Pug (MFP), Andrew McLees (AM), Mandy Baca (MB), and the late Pamela Robin Brandt (PRB) (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.

\$ = \$10 and under
\$\$ = \$20
\$\$\$ = \$30
\$\$\$\$ = \$40
\$\$\$\$\$ = \$50 and over

MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

1111 Peruvian Bistro **1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-615-9633**

Peruvian cuisine gets honest with an ethos for ultimate transparency in the kitchen. Executive chef Geancarlo Juneorga and food superstar Diego Muñoz have gone back to the drawing board to not only find better ways to highlight every ingredient in simple dishes like causas and anticuchos, but to use higher quality products like duck and filet mignon. The team has fun with the catch of the day, so make sure to order it. \$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

Alloy Bistro **154 SE 1st Ave., 786-773-2742**

Deep within the bowels of an otherwise unspectacular swath of urban sprawl lies a small but wondrous urban oasis where the food is fresh, creative, and presented with playful finesse. Chef Federico Genovese's imaginative Mediterranean fusion menu rotates daily, and features fresh, seasonally driven recipes whose ingredients are sourced both locally and overseas. On a recent visit, nothing fell short of divine: the 24-hour short rib served over aged white cheddar and topped with mashed potatoes was expertly prepared. A showstopping take on a classic blueberry tart dessert served with coconut foam garnished with powdered green tea was an inspired way to end the night. Even the bread was baked to perfection and served with the most fragrant olive oil I've ever had the pleasure of tasting. If there is an oyster's pearl to be found in the heart of downtown Miami, this is it. \$\$\$ (AM)

All Day **1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-699-3447**

Here is a stroke of inspired insanity: an artisanal coffee shop and all-day breakfast bistro at the edge of downtown Miami's clubland corridor. Fans of breakfast have plenty to fawn over, including a delicious baked egg and leek skillet served with a side of toasted baguette, and a curiously exotic poached egg and congee bowl. Sandwiches and salads are also available. The space is bright and accented with beautiful natural woods, and sports some seriously hip flourishes including a neon drink menu illuminating the coffee station. Single-origin coffee is a specialty here and the baristas prepare it with effortless finesse. For the weekend warriors, after the all-night EDM bender, thankfully there is All Day. \$\$ (AM)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

American Social **690 SW 1st Ct., 305-223-7004**

The gastropub grows up, offering a huge modern playground for the social butterfly to enjoy all aspects of life. From indulgent chicken and waffles at brunch to open-faced short rib flatbreads at dinner, dozens of craft beers and a long list of cocktails for happy hour, flat-screen TVs to watch all the important games, and even an area to dock your boat. Your most difficult task will be choosing between plush indoor seating and outdoor riverside seating. \$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

Arson **104 NE 2nd Ave., 786-717-1711**

James Beard-nominated chef Deme Lomas is known for his Spanish tapas restaurant NIU Kitchen in downtown Miami, but his latest venture is poised to steal the spotlight. Located just a stone's throw from NIU Kitchen, Arson remedies some of that restaurant's shortcomings — a tight space and limited menu — to craft a distinct yet familiar experience that will appeal to NIU fans and first-timers alike. The Jospier charcoal oven makes meats like the Patagonian lamb chops and Angus

grass-fed skirt steak come out perfect; one bite of either will entice you to order a second round. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Atelier Monnier **848 Brickell Ave. #120, 305-456-5015**

Sesame Street's Cookie Monster adores all cookies. As a more specialized Macaron Monster, we assure you that this French bakery/café's exquisite macarons (not clunky coconut macaroons, but delicate, crackly crusted/moist inside almond cookies, sandwiching creamy ganache fillings in flavors ranging from vanilla or praline to seasonal fruits) are reason enough to drop in daily, perhaps hourly. That the place also hand-crafts equally authentic French breads, complex pastries, baguette sandwiches, salads, soups, quiches, omelet's, ice creams, and chocolates is a bonus — icing on the gateaux. \$\$ (PRB)

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 Juneo-dressed lobster sandwich, crisp-skinned snapper with grapefruit salsa and basil aioli, a bracing orange tart, even citrus butter in the bread basket. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ (PRB)

Balans **901 S. Miami Ave., (Mary Brickell Village), 305-534-9191**

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

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Bazaar Mar **1300 S. Miami Ave., 305-239-1320**

Chef José Andrés has another hit on his hands. The renowned chef's seafood concept embraces the playful menu touches and whimsical décor of his other Miami restaurant (The Bazaar), treating diners to an unforgettable dinner and show. To see the spectacle in action, start with a liquid nitrogen caipirinha and watch as it's made tableside. Dinner items like the fish-shaped bagel and lox, rose-shaped cobia ceviche, and octopus-shaped "funnel cake" need to be seen to be believed. Thankfully, the presentation isn't compensating for anything: The food tastes as good as it looks. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Bengal Indian Cuisine **109 NE 1st St., 305-403-1976**

To say that there's a lack of Indian restaurants in South Florida would be an understatement. Thankfully, Bengal Indian Cuisine in downtown Miami helps bolster the county's slim offerings with tasty classics like chicken tikka masala, pakora (lentil-based vegetable fritters), and naan bread. Although they warrant their prices, the à la carte offerings for dinner can quickly put a dent in your dining budget. Instead, take advantage of the generous lunch buffet that won't break the bank. \$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Big Easy **701 S. Miami Ave., 786-866-9854**

If you visit Big Easy with expectations of po'boys, muffuletta's, and beignets, you're going to be very disappointed. The restaurant has nothing to do with New Orleans — it's actually the nickname for South African golf pro Ernie Els, one of the restaurant's partners. Here's what you can expect: delectable South African cuisine incorporating a wealth of flavors and spices. Start with the Boerie Bites — they look like mini-hot dogs but elevated — then work your way to the bison ribeye and the toasted couscous risotto, which can double as a meal. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

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, unpretentious 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. \$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Obra Kitchen Table **1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-846-9363**

Latin restaurants are a dime a dozen, but few challenge your palate like Obra Kitchen Table. At this Brickell hotspot inside the Jade, chef Carlos Garcia and his team craft an assortment of Venezuelan delights that also incorporate global influences. The result: unique bites like grouper confit with fried arepa, yuca and bacon millefeuille, and octopus bucatini carbonara unlike anything you've tasted. Sit at the 25-seat bar for a more intimate dining experience, where you'll see these creations come to life. \$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Katsuya **8 SE 8th St., 305-859-0200**

Fans of Miami Beach's Katsuya no longer have to cross the bridge to get their sushi fix. Located at the SLS Lux in Brickell, this latest branch of the popular Asian restaurant features many of its sister location's favorites, along with new soon-to-be favorites like A5 fried rice with wagyu beef and tea-smoked duck confit leeks. Although the design of this Brickell beauty may be minimalist, the food is not — it speaks volumes, and you'll want definitely want to listen. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ (MFP)

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Sette Osteria **2103 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-8282**

Eagle-eyed visitors will find an unassuming Italian restaurant

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 taste-bud-tickling snapper carpaccio; an elegant nest of mee krob (sweet, crisp rice noodles); blessedly non-citrus-drenched tuna tataki, drizzled with spicy-sweet Juneo and wasabi cream sauce; green-inducing "bags of gold," deep-fried wonton beggar's purses with a shrimp/pork/mushroom/water chestnut filling and tamarind sauce. \$\$ (PRB)

Boulud Sud **255 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-421-8800**

Those mourning the loss of db Bistro Moderne in downtown Miami now have reason to smile. Renowned chef Daniel Boulud hasn't given up on South Florida. He's brought down his popular Mediterranean concept Boulud Sud to fill the space. Items like lamb flatbread, grilled octopus, and Baharat chicken have replaced the French-focused fare of Sud's predecessor. Although much of the restaurant has changed, one thing hasn't: It's still home to one of the best happy hours in the city. \$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

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

Anyone looking for brunch, a quick lunch or dinner would be remiss to snub Café Bastille, a quaint bistro that practically vanishes against downtown Miami's dreary cityscape. Once inside, however, this modern French eatery oozes charm and boasts seriously hearty portions, especially during brunch. The ham and salmon benedicts as well as the crêpes are phenomenal, and no French meal is complete without sampling dessert. For dinner, try the filet mignon de boeuf served over a creamy pepper-corn sauce. Remember to ask about daily specials; it's easy to overlook the tiny board located in the back of the restaurant. \$\$ (AM)

Café at Books & Books **1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-695-8898**

Adding unique literary/culinary arts components to the Arshet Center, this casual indoor/outdoor café, directed by Chef Allen Susser (arguably Miami's earliest and most dedicated local-ingredients booster), serves fresh and fun farm-to-table fare all day, everyday — unlike the Arshet's upscale Brava!, open only for pre-performance dinners. Especially delightful vegetarian/vegan dishes range from snacks like cornmeal-battered "urban pickles" with dill tsatziki to a hefty curried cauliflower steak. Major breakfast fees include heritage pork hash, eggs with Miami Smokers bacon, and free parking till 10:00 a.m. (in Lot C). \$\$\$ (PRB)

Cantina La Veinte **495 Brickell Ave., 786-623-6135**

In a spectacularly stylized indoor/outdoor waterfront setting, this first U.S. venture from Mexico's Cincerosol Group serves upscale modern Mexican fare with international influences transcending Tex-Mex.

at the southern end of Wynwood: Sette Osteria. The Washington, D.C., transplant is located away from the hustle and bustle of the neighborhood, but it's only a matter of time before word gets out about this culinary gem. Earthy tones and an open kitchen welcome diners, who will fall in love with signature dishes like seafood linguine and veal scallopini. A bevy of Italian wines await to quench your thirst as well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Kyoto Nikkei Cuisine **18146 Collins Ave., 305-466-6775**

Fusion cuisine can be hit or miss, but the combination of Peruvian and Japanese flavors is usually a good time. Kyoto Nikkei Cuisine takes these two cultures and puts the best parts of each on your plate. Sushi rolls are a given here — as is ceviche — and both deserve room at your table. What caught us off guard, though, were the wallet-friendly specials. The strip mall location is deceptive: Kyoto is worth a look. \$\$\$ (MFP)

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Le Pain Quotidien **19565 Biscayne Blvd., 786-629-5056**

At Le Pain Quotidien, diners get the best of both worlds. Those on the run can grab LPQ's ready-to-go croissants, scones, and soups, while guests who'd rather sit back can enjoy hot dishes like croque monsieurs and crispy quinoa cakes at their leisure. Regardless, both types of diners should make it a point to order the bakery's signature drinks, which range from healthy to downright decadent. The Belgian mocha — available hot or iced — is the perfect post-dinner treat. \$\$\$ (MFP)

No ground-beef tacos here. Rather, fillings range from cochinita pibil (pork in achiote/orange sauce) to grilled bone marrow — even escamoles: butter-sautéed ant eggs. For the less adventurous, fried calamari with a Jamaican-inspired hibiscus reduction or dobladitas de jaiabas suave, delectably crunchy softshell crabs wrapped in flour tortillas with creamy/kicky jalapeño sauce, are irresistible. Bonus: A specialty market/deli with imported packaged goods, cheeses, pastries, more. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Casa Tua Cucina **70 SW 7th St., 305-755-0320**

Casa Tua, the Miami Beach institution, has made its way to the mainland. Unlike the South Beach location, this outpost of Casa Tua isn't an Italian restaurant — it's an Italian food hall. Located inside Saks Fifth Avenue at Brickell City Centre, the first-floor concept is made up of various dedicated stations. Those craving pasta can choose from several delicious white- and red-sauce dishes, while guests in the mood for pizza have no shortage of selections. Portions are big, so come hungry. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Cipriani **465 Brickell Ave., 786-329-4090**

Derived, like all Cipriani family restaurants worldwide, from legendary Harry's Bar in Venice (a favorite of Truman Capote, Hemingway, and other famous folks since 1931), this glamorous indoor/outdoor riverfront location in loon has two absolutely must-not-miss menu items, both invented at Harry's and reproduced here to perfection: beef carpaccio (drizzled artfully with streaks of creamy-rich mustard vinaigrette, not mere olive oil) and the Bellini (a cocktail of prosecco, not champagne, and fresh white peach juice). Venetian-style liver and onions could convert even liver-loathers. Finish with elegant vanilla meringue cake. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Clove Mediterranean Kitchen **195 SE 3rd Ave., 786-717-6788**

Clove Mediterranean Kitchen whips up affordable and healthy fare for the businessperson on the go. Streamlined counter service offers a selection of basic building blocks: a base (pita, bowl, or salad), a dip or spread, proteins and veggies, and toppings and dressings, including smoked paprika mustard, honey and orange tahini, and creamy feta. Although the cuisine tends toward the light side of Mediterranean cooking, portion sizes are undeniably hearty, making Clove a serious value. With its hip, clean, fast-casual appeal and above average cuisine, this is a welcome addition to the bustling downtown neighborhood, where people are hungry for exciting alternatives to the brown bag lunch and leftovers. \$\$\$ (AM)

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

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

The Craftsman

900 S. Miami Ave. #135, 305-400-8226
Diners who frequented Brother Jimmy's in Mary Brickell Village will find that its replacement — The Craftsman — has kept a few of the now-shuttered restaurant's amenities (namely the televisions). That's where the similarities end, though. The new bar has swapped barbecue dishes and large-format cocktails for small bar bites like avocado toast and an array of whimsical libations. Unlike its casual predecessor, The Craftsman pulls in a classier clientele, ultimately making it a better fit for the Brickell neighborhood. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Crust

668 NW 5th St., 305-371-7065
Chef-restaurateur Klime Kovaceski is back, and we are oh so glad. Not only does his pizza-focused restaurant fill a hole in the neighborhood, it offers a cozy space that feels more like someone's rustic home. A lot of thought went into their crusts, and it shows — sturdy enough to hold less traditional ingredients like perfectly cooked octopus and steak, and still doughy on the inside. The medium at 14 inches and 6 slices is large enough for two, and there will still be leftovers. Delivery available. \$\$ (MB)

CVI.CHE 105

105 NE 3rd Ave., 305-577-3454
Fusion food — a modern invention? Not in Peru, where native and Euro-Asian influences have mixed for more than a century. But chef Juan Chipoco gives the ceviches and tiraditos served at this hot spot his own unique spin. Specialties include flash-marinated raw seafood creations, such as *tiradito a la crema de rocoto* (sliced fish in citrus-spiked chili/cream sauce). But traditional fusion dishes like Chinese-Peruvian Chaufa fried rice (packed with jumbo shrimp, mussels, and calamari) are also fun, as well as surprisingly affordable. \$\$ (PRB)

DIRT

900 S. Miami Ave. #125, 786-235-8033
DIRT, South Beach's popular clean-eating concept, has brought its talents to Mary Brickell Village. The restaurant's third location features an extensive menu that has Brickell diners covered from morning to evening. Breakfast is served all day here, so if you want a frittata tostada or matcha pancakes at 3:00 p.m., DIRT can make it happen. Tasty toasts — including the ever-present avocado variety — and sandwiches abound, but it's the seasonal platters that will keep you coming back. \$\$ (MFP)

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-403-3103
From the stylish setting in Miami's historic Firehouse No. 4, one would expect a mighty pricy meal. But entrées, which range from Nuevo Latino-style ginger/orange-glazed pork tenderloin to a platter of Kobe mini-burgers, all cost either \$18 or \$23. And the price includes an appetizer — no low-rent crapola, either, but treats like Serrano ham croquetas, a spinach/leek tart with Portobello mushroom sauce, or shrimp-topped eggplant timbales. The best seats are on the glam rooftop patio. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Doraku

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-373-4633
Happy hour comes twice daily (after work and lunch) at this second location of a popular South Beach sushi, pan-Asian, small-plates resto-lounge, bringing discounted prices on treats like rock shrimp tempura with spicy aioli. Regular prices are reasonable, too, for seafood flown in daily, and makis displaying solid creativity rather than gimmickry. Especially enjoyable are items accented by Japanese ingredients rarely found in Americanized sushi bars, like the Geisha Roll's astringent shiso leaf, beautifully balancing spicy tuna, pickled radish, and rich eel sauce. A huge sake menu, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

F'lia

1300 S. Miami Ave., 305-912-1729
F'lia ("daughter" in Latin) is the newest edition to James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Schwartz's foodie empire. Here, Italian cuisine is treated with a delicate twist, as Old World offerings and regionally specific recipes are prepared with exquisite attention to detail. F'lia finds a warm home in the ultra sleek and modern SLS Brickell, handsomely designed by Philippe Starck. Touches of teak and twine give this sophisticated dining experience a rustic touch. Service is thoughtfully choreographed to welcome and engage with diners. This being a Michael Schwartz restaurant, fresh ingredients are paramount; oregano is freshly snipped to season olive oil, and caesar salads are served tableside. Cocktails are sublime, and the kitchen makes no short use of their brick oven, churning out dishes such as charred eggplant spread, wild mushroom pizza, and braised short rib crespelle. With comfort food this hip and fresh, F'lia just June be well on its way to becoming your new favorite date-night haunt. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Jon Smith Subs

161 SE 1st St., 305-403-9493
In downtown Miami, lunchtime spots need to be quick, efficient, and delicious to survive. Jon Smith Subs meets those criteria. The store offers fast, friendly service and ample portions that can double as dinner. You'll find the usual steak and chicken subs here, but Jon Smith's more unique flavors are where the shop truly shines. Items like the Cuban (a Cuban sandwich in a sub) and a "Reuben on Cuban" lets guests know that the eatery embraces its Miami audience. \$ (MFP)

Komodo

801 Brickell Ave., 305-534-2211
Accommodating a whopping 300 seats, this contemporary three-floor behemoth blurs the line between restaurant and lounge. An indoor/outdoor layout festooned with floating bird-nest pods creates a treehouse ambiance enhanced only by Southeast Asian fusion of tuna porterhouse, lobster onion rings, skewers of miso black cod, and wasabi shrimp. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

La Centrale

601 S. Miami Ave.
There's no such thing as too much Italian food at La Centrale, the three-floor Brickell City Centre dining hall. Each floor houses a variety of themed concepts: Meat and seafood lovers should head to the second floor, where Pesce and Carne, respectively, will hit the spot, while pizza fans can find satiety at Pizza e Pasta on the first floor. In a hurry? Head to the Mercato for grab-and-go bites or to do a little ingredient shopping for a hearty meal at home. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

La Mar by Gastón Acurio

500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8358
It's said that Peruvian cuisine is Latin America's most varied and sophisticated. Reserve a patio table at this indoor/outdoor Mandarin Oriental eatery to experience Miami's best for yourself — along with some of the city's best bayfront vistas. The specialty is seafood, and the beautifully balanced recipes of Acurio (called Peru's food ambassador to the world), executed flawlessly by onsite executive chef Diego Oka, especially elevate ceviches, similar but more delicate tiraditos, uniquely lively "Nikkei" (Peruvian-Japanese fusion) sushi creations, and elegant whipped potato/fresh seafood causas, to world-class fine-dining level. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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 Peruvian 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

La Petite Maison

1300 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-403-9133
On any given night, you're sure to find a lively crowd at La Petite Maison. The internationally acclaimed French and Mediterranean restaurant has unsurprisingly garnered a loyal following since its opening. Don't expect out-of-the-box creations here: La Petite Maison focuses on getting the classics right. Items like the tuna carpaccio, grilled veal chop, roasted baby chicken, and rack of lamb may sound simple on paper, but once they hit your palate, you'll realize what all the fuss is about. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Luke's Lobster

Brickell City Centre, 701 S. Miami Ave., #353, 786-837-7683
Lobster rolls are tiny, sometimes overpriced slices of luxury, especially when portions run about as small as your average New York City apartment. This is not the case at Luke's Lobster, the venerable New England fast-casual chain championing traceable, sustainable seafood. Luke's understands the key to its destination status involves copious amounts of fresh lobster (1/4 pound, to be exact) as well as a healthy dose of disarming simplicity. True to its simple charm, Luke's Lobster is about as cheap and cheerful as seafood gets. All of the rolls — lobster, crab, and shrimp — are delicious, but it's the signature buttery lobster roll with its split top bun and mysterious seasoning that is an absolute must-try for the uninitiated. Considering its limited seating, it's safe to say this playfully rustic yet diminutive eatery gets hit hard during peak lunch rush at Brickell City Centre. \$\$ (AM)

Lutong Pinoy Filipino Cuisine

195 SE 3rd Ave., 786-717-6788
For the adventurous epicurean of Asian persuasion, Lutong Pinoy offers a deep dive into authentic Filipino cuisine, an otherwise unmapped territory to a great majority of South Florida's bon vivants. Influenced by Malay-Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and American cuisines, Lutong Pinoy crafts plates showcasing ingredients indigenous to the Philippines, and offers an extensive menu touching upon a full spectrum of exotic flavors. Some of the highlights at this diminutive hole-in-the-wall include the boneless lechón belly (roasted pig), kare-kare kawali (Asian vegetables cooked in peanut sauce), and the Sinigang na Hipon (shrimp in sour broth). For many, however, the main event is the halo-halo, a popular Filipino dessert made with shaved ice and evaporated milk, topped with a mélange of ingredients, including sweet red and white beans, bananas, coconut, sweet potato, coco jellies, leche flan, and milk. The boodle fight platter is piled high with an assortment of meat, rice, and vegetables on a bed of banana leaves. First conceived in the mess halls of the Filipino military, the boodle fight platter encourages eating with your hands. When checking in, remember to keep your mind and stomach wide open. \$\$\$ (AM)

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Marion

1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-717-7512

Third time's the charm for this behemoth space that works best when broken up into different offerings. In this case, this rose-colored Mediterranean palace by the guys behind Babi Miami is a café, restaurant, bakery, and oyster bar all at once. Save space for French classics like whole rotisserie organic chicken (large enough for two) and whole fish baked in Normandy sea salt and filleted tableside. Other (smaller) standouts include piquillo peppers, tuna belly ribbons, and of course, dessert. \$\$\$\$ (MB)

Meraki Greek Bistro

142 SE 1st Ave., 786-773-1535

Tucked away in an unassuming and quaint nook of downtown Miami, Meraki Greek Bistro is a pleasant surprise for anyone hunting for an urban hideaway. With a pride that is palpable, this bright little bistro boasts friendly service and delicious Mediterranean medium to large plates. Sample Mediterranean fare à la carte from Meraki's souvlaki (skewer) bar, or share a *poikilies* (family meal). Specials are also served daily, further expounding upon all of the wonderfully slow-cooked options on the menu. Meraki Greek Bistro offers everything you'd hope for in casual dining at a reasonable price. When it comes to Greek, the proof is in baklava — and these guys nail it. \$-\$\$ (AM)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

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 Juneo), but this time with seats! What to eat? Ceviches, natch. But grilled or raw fish/seafood tacos and bur-

and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic *parillita*-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style *ceviche de chernia* (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Novikov

300 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-489-1000

When we first heard of Novikov, we thought the upscale downtown Miami restaurant was all about Russian food. We were wrong. Although the restaurant gets its name from Russian restaurateur Arkadiy Novikov, the menu is composed of Chinese and Japanese favorites. Everything is shareable, and most patrons should find satiety with two to three dishes each. If you only order two dishes, the rainbow naruto roll and duck salad are must-tries — especially the latter, with its deliciously crispy skin. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Nusr-Et

999 Brickell Ave., 305-415-9990

Internet sensation Salt Bae (aka Nusret Koche) has made his way to Miami with a new outpost of his popular steakhouse, Nusr-Et. The restaurant, which opened inside the old Coya space, is unsurprisingly heavy on meat, particularly beef. Expect beef ribs, beef chop, beef tenderloin, and much more alongside lamb and other hearty proteins. If you want to meet the star himself, your best bet is to order one of the pricier cuts, which he salts tableside like you've seen in the videos. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Pega Grill

15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666

From Thanasis Barlos, a Greek native who formerly owned North Beach's Ariston, this small spot is more casually contemporary and less ethnic-kitschy in ambiance, but serves equally authentic, full-flavored Greek food. Mixed lamb/beef *gyros* (chicken is also an option), topped with tangy yogurt sauce and wrapped, with greens and tomatoes, in fat warm pita bread, are specialties. But even more irresistible is the *taramasalata* (particularly velvety and light carp roe dip), available alone or on an olive/pita-garnished mixed meze platter. \$\$ (PRB)

Perricone's

15 SE 10th St., 305-374-9449

Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this

Poké 305

169 SE 7th St., 305-563-3811

Hawaiian poké is currently enjoying a nice long moment in the sun, and if you're even the slightest bit excited by the thought of sushi, it's easy to understand why. This exotic raw fish dish is front and center at Poké 305: seven exotic signature dishes and a trendy build-your-own-bowl option, served fast-casual style amid a spartan smattering of industrial décor. The signature "Big Mao" Alaka'i bowl — salmon, tuna, and crab salad drizzled with wasabi aioli — is the biggest and baddest bowl of the bunch, but all the dishes are equally adept at satisfying a raw fish craving. Word of advice: skip the overpriced drinks. \$\$ (AM)

Quinto La Huella

788 Brickell Plaza, 786-805-4646

Uruguayan beef is in a class of its own, but it requires serious skill and the right tools to prepare it the way Uruguayan *parilleros* do. Located within the hulking steeled Brickell City Centre, Quinto La Huella brings a dark, moody ambiance and the prestige of one of South America's best restaurants, Parador La Huella, to the complex. The centerpiece of this rustic eatery is an authentic wood fire *parilla*, an essential component to grilling meat like a true *gaucho*. It should come as no surprise then that the beef — ordered medium rare, of course — is the main attraction here. Other options represent typical steakhouse fare, with some standout wood-fired seafood entrées and pastas that deserve a try. Snag a seat outdoors during the more temperate Miami months; otherwise, opt to sit near the heart of the controls: the *parilla*. Bring a liberal side of patience with you while dining room service sorts itself out. \$\$\$ (AM)

Raja's Indian Cuisine

33 NE 2nd Ave., 305-539-9551

Despite its small size and décor best described as "none," this place is an institution thanks to south Indian specialties rarely found in Miami's basically north Indian restaurants. The steam-tabled curries are fine (and nicely priced), but be sure to try the custom-made *dosai* (lacy rice crepes with a variety of savory fillings) and *uttapam*, thicker pancakes, layered with onions and chilis, both served with *sambar* and *chutney*. \$\$ (PRB)

Raw Juice

901 S. Miami Ave., 305-677-3160

Brickell's Raw Juice is making healthy living easy with a colorful array of cold-pressed "juice." Fruit-forward and vegetable-forward creations not only refresh but also give customers a quick vitamin boost. Despite the name, Raw Juice isn't just about juices: acai bowls,

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 vinaigrette sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired humagr/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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Station 28

91 SE 2nd St., 305-905-0328

A little paradise in the heart of downtown Miami, complete with hidden patio, lush greenery, long communal tables, tropical juices like papaya and lucuma, and extra large Peruvian sandwiches and burgers. This oasis offers a more casual taste of the cuisine, the comfort foods that will remind you of home, no matter where you come from. Their \$10 daily special includes your choice of a sandwich or burger with fries, salad or soup, and dessert. Delivery available. \$ (MB)

The Taco Stand

313 NW 25th St., 786-580-4948

We know what you're thinking: "Oh great, another taco shop in Wynwood." The neighborhood is certainly not lacking in options, but this San Diego transplant is sure to give its neighbors some healthy competition. Those familiar with the brand know that the seafood offerings like the Baja taco (battered fish) and spicy shrimp taco are winners; just one bite is all the proof you need. Another must: a mountain of *carne asada* and fries, which can feed a group of four. \$ (MFP)

Tacology

701 S. Miami Ave., 786-347-5368

Tacology, the latest concept from Cantina La Veinte's executive chef Santiago Gomez, is a more approachable and affordable ode to Mexican food. Unlike its dimly lit upscale sibling, Tacology embraces a bright color palette and vibrant décor that is undeniably enticing — a description that also applies to the cuisine. As the name suggests, delicious tacos abound on the menu, but they shouldn't be the only items you order: The Mexican nachos and crispy pork skin are other standout dishes that should be on every diner's mind at this Brickell City Centre restaurant. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

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 — upscale refinements of classic favorites: crisp corn arepas with short rib, guacamole, and *crema fresca*; fluffier *chachapas* pancakes with tomato jam; more. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Toscana Divino

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-571-2767

When an upscale restaurant remains perennially packed during a recession, you figure they're offering something way beyond the usual generic Italian fare. While familiar favorites (Caprese salad, etc.) are available, the changing menu is highlighted by harder-to-find Tuscan specialties, albeit luxe versions: *pappa al pomodoro*, tomato/bread peasant soup elevated by an organic poached egg and *finocchio* (a regional fennel salami); an authentic-tasting "fiorentina" porterhouse, with smoked potato purée plus more traditional veggies. A budget-conscious boon: changing three-course lunches and early-bird dinners. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Trapiche Room

1109 Brickell Ave., 305-329-3656

With multiple Marriott hotels in Brickell and downtown, one of them housing high-profile db Bistro, it's not surprising that this small, second-floor restaurant is something of a "best kept secret." But it deserves discovery. Chef Maria Tobar hasn't Daniel Boulud's fame, but she does have classic European-type technical skills, combined with contemporary creativity that turns even ultimately old-fashioned items, like a pork/cabbage strudel, into 21st century fine-dining fare. Both décor and service, similarly, are swellegant, not stuffy, and the room's intimacy makes it a romantic spot for special occasions. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Verde Restaurant & Bar

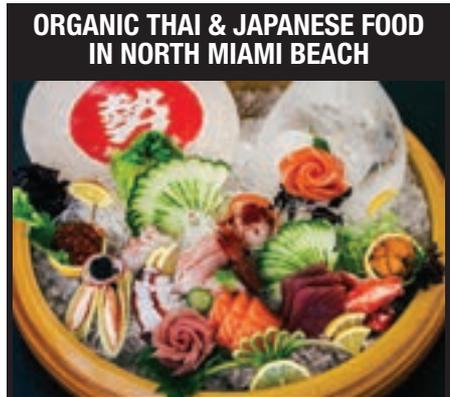
1103 Biscayne Blvd., 305-375-8282

Located in the Pérez Art Museum Miami, this indoor/outdoor bay-front bistro, a project of restaurateur Stephen Starr, serves elegant, eco-friendly fare to match PAMM's green certification. (Museum admission not required.) Seafood crudos shine: *hamachi* "sashimi" slices flash-marinated in a subtle citrus/ponzu emulsion and enlivened by jalapeño relish; a sprout-topped, smoothly sauced tuna tartare with lemon and horseradish flavors substituting for clichéd sesame. Light pizzas topped with near paper-thin zucchini slices, goat cheese, roasted garlic EVOO, and squash blossoms virtually define farm-to-table. And doughnuts with Cuban coffee dip are the definitively local dessert. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Whole Foods Market

299 SE 3rd Ave., 305-995-0600

From the minute you walk through its doors or pull into a spot in the underground garage, you'll notice this Whole Foods is a bit different. Not only have local artists outfitted its walls in graffiti art,



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ritos, 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. \$\$ (PRB)

N by Naoe

661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263

Like local secret-star chef Kevin Cory's dinner-only Naoe, newer lunch-only N by Naoe shares a reservations-only, omakase-only (chef's choice) policy — and actually shares the same door. Turn left for Naoe, right for N. Main differences: N has one elegant communal table, perfect for impressive power lunches (vs. Naoe's intimate individual seating), and prix fixe lunches are \$80 vs. \$200 for dinner. Admittedly, lunch is abbreviated: soup and multi-course bento box plus one dessert, without the dozen or so sushi dishes. But bentos are much bigger (seven compartments vs. four), and equally unique. Think of N as a relatively bargain-priced introduction to Naoe, or as a revelatory dining experience on its own. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Naoe

661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263

Chances are you've never had anything like the \$200 prix-fixe Japanese dinner at Kevin Cory's tiny but internationally acclaimed oasis, but trust us: It's one of those rare, exhilarating, instantly revelatory Eureka! dining adventures that'll keep you thinking about it for years. The reservations-only, omakase-only (chef's choice) meals begin with a subtly inventive seasonal soup true to both Japanese tastes and local terroir (like miso/fresh Homestead corn) and a four-course bento box of the chef's creations, proceed to about a dozen sushi dishes eons above others in Miami, and end with three desserts. Always changing, always astonishing. \$\$\$ (PRB)

NIU Kitchen

134 NE 2nd Ave., 786-542-5070

This contemporary Catalan eatery is located, according to its three playful proprietors, "somewhere between Dalí's moustache and Gaudí's Sagrada Família." Actually, it's in the heart of downtown, but the description does reflect the Barcelona-born chef's weirdly wonderful yet seriously skilled twists on tapas. Instead of Catalonia's rustic, bread-thickened tomato soup, there's a refined cold tomato broth poured over a mustard ioe cream-topped croton. Mato, a simple cheese and honey dessert, translates as custardy fresh cheese atop eggplant "jam," with candied hazelnuts. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Novecento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900

For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef



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market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi *fiocchi* purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) — featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more — remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$ (PRB)

Pieducks

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-808-7888

If you can overlook a name as unenlightening as most in-jokes (it evidently refers to a favorite character of owner Claudio Nunes's kids — we assume the Pokemon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-broiled 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. \$\$ (PRB)

Pilo's Street Tacos

28 SW 11th St., 305-800-8226

Three words describe Pilo's Street Tacos in Brickell: good, fast, and filling. The area already has its fair share of taco shops, and Pilo's is among the pricier offerings, but that's because of the quality — and quantity. These tacos are filled to the brim with proteins like "drunken shrimp," brisket strips, and crispy chorizo. Don't miss out on the *salsas*: There are ten different ones from which to choose, and they range from sweet to spicy to "Somebody call a fire truck." \$\$\$ (MFP)

Pincho Factory

1250 S. Miami Ave., 786-536-4557

What started as a humble burger and kebab shop in Westchester turned into one of South Florida's biggest restaurant success stories. Pincho Factory has quickly expanded throughout Dade and Broward, and the new Brickell location continues its tradition of mad-scientist creations. Case in point: the Toston Burger, which uses fried plantain patties for buns. While there are healthier options like the kebabs (pinchos in Spanish), being adventurous pays off — especially when it comes to the mouthwatering chalkboard specials. Just save room for Pincho's sweet potato tots and apple butter. \$-\$\$ (MFP)



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oatmeal parfaits, and salads are available to get patrons ready for their workout or help them recover from a grueling one. For those of you in need of a serious detox, Raw Juice's cleanse packages have you covered. \$\$ (MFP)

The River Oyster Bar

650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915

This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked — fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Seaspice Brasserie & Lounge

422 NW N. River Dr., 305-440-4200

Unlike older Miami River market/restaurants like Garcia's, run by fishing families, this stylishly retro/modern-industrial converted warehouse (once Howard Hughes's plane hangar) has an owner who ran South Beach's hottest 1990s nightspots, so expect celebrity sightings with your seafood. What's unexpected: a blessedly trendy menu, with simply but skillfully prepared wood-oven-cooked fish and clay-pot, shellfish casserole. Standouts include luxurious lobster thermidor, as rich as it is pricey. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$-\$\$ (PRB)

Sparky's Roadside Barbecue

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

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

but also half of the store is dedicated to grab-and-go food and an ample and comfortable seating area, including casual counters and tables. Grab a coffee for energy at MET café, because you June be there awhile. Options include items from Jugofresh, Zak the Baker, and pre-made desserts by Versailles restaurant. There's also La Churrasqueira, Sushi Maki, Pizza Bar, and a soup bar featuring 20 soups like stone crab and chicken corn chowder. Parking is free for one hour with the purchase of an item. \$\$\$ (MB)

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. \$\$\$\$ (PRB)

Zest 200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9378

Cindy Hutson finally has a home in the neighborhood with her "cuisine of the sun." If you can manage to order the entire menu, from cast-iron charred calamari to 50/50 meatballs and conch scampi, do it. You won't be disappointed in food that is so perfectly matches the city's weather and overall culture. The décor also screams Miami, in lively lime green, orange, and neutrals with pops of blue in between. Don't forget the tropical drink. \$\$\$\$\$ (MB)

Zuma 270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

This Miami River restorlounge has a London parent on San Pellegrino's list of the world's best restaurants, and a similar menu of world-class, Izakaya-style smallish plates (robata-grilled items, sushi, much more) meant for sharing over drinks. Suffice to say that it would take Junebe 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Zuuk Mediterranean Kitchen 1250 S. Miami Ave. #105, 305-200-3145

Middle Eastern cuisine receives the fast-casual treatment at this build-your-own-meal concept focused on serving quality salads, pita wraps, and customizable rice and grain bowls. It's refreshing that executive chefs Sam Gorenstein and Danny Ganem deliberately chose to eschew fried foods; all of Zuuk's offerings sit pretty on the "fresh, fast, and light" side of dining. Star-making dishes include a delicious spiced lamb kefte, slow roasted beef, and baked falafel, replete with regional Mediterranean sauces, spreads, and other flavorful toppings that add character to your meal. Table service is practically nonexistent, but the financier with 15 minutes to spare will appreciate the fact that counter service is about as brisk and pleasant as a cool Mediterranean sea breeze. \$\$\$ (AM)

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

1-800-Lucky 143 NW 23rd St., 305-768-9826

Say hello to Miami's first Asian food hall. Wynwood's 1-800-Lucky is home to seven concepts, each with its own signature cuisine. In the mood for ramen? Step up to Hayato for the Tonkotsu. Craving a hearty sandwich? Les Banh Amis is cooking up delicious tuna and Proper Sausages Vietnamese banh mis. Dim sum, sushi, and Chinese BBQ are also available at the food hall. A must: Taiyaki, the Instagram-famous ice cream with a fish-shaped cone. It's a lot tastier than it sounds. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Amara at Paraiso 3101 NE 7th Ave., 305-702-5528

Edgewater isn't usually a neighborhood that comes up in discussions of Miami's food scene. Amara at Paraiso could change that soon, however. This Latin America-inspired concept from chef Michael Schwartz overlooks Biscayne Bay, providing guests with a beautiful backdrop for an equally alluring menu. The stars of the show are the restaurant's wood grill and Jospoer oven that turn out an array of items like grilled lamb ribs, beef short rib, and hefty meat and seafood platters. The view alone is worth a visit. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Alter 223 NW 23rd St., 305-573-5996

Award-winning chef Brad Kilgore offers some of the most exciting food in town, with menu items like soft egg with sea scallop espuma, chive, truffle pearls, and Gruyere; and grouper cheeks with black rice, shoyu hollandaise, and sea lettuce. Novices don't fret — the staff will guide you through your eating journey. The warehouse vibe speaks to the neighborhood's appeal while letting the food speak for itself. Grab a spot at the chef's counter, the best seat in the house. Reservations a must. \$\$\$\$ (MB)

Baja Bao 55 NW 25th St.

Pubbelly, the beloved Miami Beach eatery, continues its expansion on the mainland with a new concept that melds Asian and Latin flavors. Located inside Wynwood's Veza Surf brewery, this permanent food truck treats imbibers to an array of steamed buns filled with the likes of chicken mole, carnitas, and crispy mahi-mahi. Smaller bites like fried calamari and BBQ steak quesadillas are also available. No matter what you order, make sure to throw in one of the decadent creations from Pubbelly dessert queen Maria Orantes. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Beaker & Gray 2637 N. Miami Ave., 305-699-2637

Named after essential tools in the kitchen, you can't miss the restaurant, with its rooftop orange neon sign. Inside industrial meets

rustic chic, as is the standard in Wynwood. All menus are expertly labeled and separated into fun, yet useful categories like Bites, Colds, Strange, and Shaken. The sandwichito with pork belly and watermelon rind on plantain brioche, and adult-friendly chicken nuggets with avocado and sweet 'n' sour have become quite iconic. The wine list includes lesser-known vineyards. \$\$\$ (MB)

Blackbrick 3451 NE 1st Ave. #103, 305-573-8886

Inspiration for the Chinese food at this hotspot came from authentic flavors Richard Hales (from Sakaya Kitchen) encountered during travels in China, but the chef's considerable imagination figures in mightily. Example: Don't expect General Tso's chicken on the changing menu. The General's Florida Gator, though, is a distinct possibility. Dishes less wild but still thrilling, due to strong spicing: bing (chewy Chinese flatbread) with char sui, garlic, and scallions; two fried tofu/veggie dishes (one hot, one not) savory enough to bring bean curd maligners (and confirmed carnivores) to their knees. \$\$\$\$ (PRB)

Bunbury 2200 NE 2nd Ave., 305-333-6929

Bunbury has an easy charm that is hard to deny and even harder to fake. The eclectic décor and quirky yet cozy ambiance, earmarks of many new eateries, comes off as unpretentiously artful. The fact that the restaurant is located in a converted tire shop and features ample outdoor seating makes the dining experience even more fun. But atmosphere would mean zilch if the food didn't pass muster. Thankfully, Bunbury's affordable Argentinian-American cuisine is fantastic. Count on a good selection of cheeses, cured meats, appetizers, well-portioned seasonal entrées, an extensive wine list culled mostly from Argentina (naturally), and some incredible house-made empanadas. If you're dining during the cooler months, definitely grab a seat outdoors. \$\$\$ (AM)

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 house-made pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's homemade French sweets, if you grab the last Paris-Brest, a praline butter-cream-filled puff pastry, we June have to kill you. \$\$\$ (PRB)

The Butcher Shop Beer Garden & Grill 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. \$\$\$\$ (PRB)

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 the 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo lump crab cake with no discernable binder. At one South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Martha Stewart proclaimed it the best she'd ever had. Our own prime pick: melt-in-your-mouth ginger sea bass anticuchos, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$ (PRB)

Catch Grill & Bar 1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arshet 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. \$\$\$\$ (PRB)

Carrot Express Midtown 3252 Buena Vista Blvd. #108, 786-312-1424

In the past few years, healthy fast-casual concepts have become a dime a dozen in Miami. Predating many of them is Carrot Express, a Miami Beach staple that's been serving up lean and green offerings for roughly half a decade. The latest Carrot Express outpost in Midtown finally brings favorites like poke bowls and stuffed sweet potatoes to the mainland. Herbivores, in particular, have reason to rejoice: Vegan burgers and sausages are just a few of the plentiful meatless options available. \$\$ (MFP)

Cerveceria 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. \$\$ (PRB)

Charcoal Garden Bar + Grill 82 NW 29th St., 786-646-2998

The Wynwood Yard, a community gathering place known for its revolving food truck lineup, is now home to a full-service restaurant. It's easy to spot: Just look for the modified shipping containers that make up the whole space. Charcoal gets its name from the resident Jospoer oven, which is used to cook practically the entire menu, including vegetables, seafood, and meats. You'll be tempted to load up on skillet bread (corn bread 2.0), but make sure to save space for the whole branzino and "house specialty," an Egyptian kosheri that you'll want all to yourself. \$\$\$\$ (MFP)

Chef Leon 118 Buena Vista Blvd., 786-814-8433

This quaint, unpretentious Midtown eatery offers simple and conscientious organic meals at an affordable price. The expansive menu helmed by former Bistro Cassis chef Giovanni Lopez offers breakfast in its myriad forms served throughout the day, healthy lunch options like salads and wraps, as well as well-portioned signature



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dishes and entrées with a distinctly Argentinean flair. Sweet teeth June tingle ever so gently as one passes owner Vanesa Simon's pièce de résistance: the desert stand. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Coyo Taco 2300 NW 2nd Ave., 305-573-8228

If you go to this affordable Mexican street-food-themed joint expecting one of today's many fast-casual, healthy-type Mexican taco/burrito chains, where the attraction is mainly just that fillings are fresh, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Here tortillas are handmade and fillings are either genuinely traditional (like cochinita pibil) or delightfully original — and sometimes satisfyingly sinful, like duck confit with enough skin and fat to scandalize all the health-obsessed places. There are first-rate vegetarian fillings, too, like mushroom/huitlachiote with cotija cheese; tasty churros for dessert; and beer and margaritas. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Crazy Poke 312 NW 24th St., 786-401-7542

Crazy Poke, Wynwood's latest poke spot, is joining a crowded landscape; the neighborhood is already full of places that serve the Hawaiian specialty. Fortunately, the restaurant has one big advantage: flexibility. Guests who make their own bowl have a laundry list of ingredients available, including over one dozen mix-ins and an array of sauces like creamy miso and wasabi aioli. Signature selections like the Citrus Shrimp take the guesswork out of ordering, but we suggest you let your creativity run wild. \$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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 Juneo. 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. \$\$ (PRB)

Dr. Smood 2230 NW 2nd Ave. 786-334-4420

Its large windows and corner location will draw you in, but the comfortable and expansive minimalist interior with Carrera marble, walnut wood, and hotel-like seating will keep you. While their motto is "smart food for a good mood" in the form of mylks, smoods, and organic live juices, the menu also includes coffee, soups, salads, sandwiches, spreads like cacao mushroom tahini and seasonal berry jam, and non-traditional desserts with flax, almond meal, and coconut butter. Most of the items can be grabbed to-go, but expect to wait in line. \$\$\$ (MB)

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. \$ (PRB)

Eat Greek 3530 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-2799

Sometimes, you're in a hurry and can't enjoy a sit-down meal. Other times, all you want is to sit down, relax, and enjoy some good grub. Eat Greek is perfect for either situation. Here, those in a rush can pick up a lamb gyro pita wrap or falafel platter for the road. Or if you have the time, grab a seat and indulge in pork chops, grilled salmon, and other large plates. There's no wrong decision here. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Ella 140 NE 39th St., 786-534-8177

Located off of the Design District's upscale Palm Court, this sun-filled, airy café with pops of sea foam and blonde maple, is Michael Schwartz's newest eatery, inspired by his daughter, Ella. A breakfast and lunch spot, it focuses on simplicity with perfectly honed sandwiches, salads, and pastries. Offering only eight seats indoors, the majority of the seating is outdoors under large café umbrellas providing an excellent view of the courtyard. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

Enriqueta's Sandwich Shop 186 NE 29th St., 305-573-4681

This Cuban breakfast/lunch old-timer actually serves more than sandwiches (including mammoth daily specials) — and since reopening after a fire, does so in a cleanly renovated interior. But many hardcore fans never get past the parking lot's ordering window, and outdoors really is the best place to manage Enriqueta's mojo-marinated messy masterpiece: pan con bistec, dripping with sautéed onions, melted cheese, and potato sticks; tomatoes make the fats and calories negligible. Accompany with fresh orange juice or café con leche, and you'll never want anything else, except Junebe a bib. \$ (PRB)

Fireman Derek's Bake Shop & Café 2818 N. Miami Ave., 786-449-2517

As a genuine City of Miami firefighter, Derek Kaplan puts fires out, but since age 15 he's also been lighting fires — in his oven. The decades of baking experience shows in both his locally award-winning signature pies, especially Key lime and salted caramel "crack," and in changing produce-based seasonal selections. For fall, balanced (i.e., all-pie) breakfasts and lunches, there are also savory options like mac 'n' cheese pie, or satisfyingly rich, totally non-sissy quiches. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Ghee Indian Kitchen 3620 NE 2nd Ave.,

786-636-6122 Chef Niven Patel, the talent behind the wildly successful Ghee Indian Kitchen in Dadeland, is giving Design District foodies a reason to salivate. Cypress Tavern's former space is now home to his restaurant's second outpost, where patrons can enjoy mouthwatering bites like smoked chicken samosa, turmeric marinated ground, and

turkey kofta. Although you can order à la carte, the three-course, family-style tasting menu for \$55 is a steal and deserves your consideration; it's one of the most affordable tastings in the area. \$\$ (MFP)

GK Bistronomie 218 NW 25th St., 786-477-5151

First and foremost a seafood restaurant with nautical style and aqua tones throughout, GK and its chef, Rafael Pérez, add global flavors like gamey Cornish hen, lamb, and foie gras to Peruvian classics like ceviches, triditos, and anticuchos. Refreshing cocktails like the Chilcano — ginger ale, lime juice, bitters, and Pisco — highlight an ample Pisco selection, while an indoor/outdoor bar and breezy courtyard offer a great respite from the Miami heat. \$\$\$ (MB)

GLAM Vegan 3301 NE 1st Ave. #103-1, 786-864-0590

Whether you're a full-fledged vegan or just experimenting with plant-based fare, GLAM Vegan serves up enough unique culinary twists to keep you coming back. The Midtown Miami establishment takes what you know about "green eating" and turns it on its head with dishes like jackfruit tacos and spaghetti and meatless balls, both of which look, taste, and feel like they contain meat. Thirsty? Choose from a selection of vegan-friendly wines and beers or treat yourself to the Palm Springs Date Shake. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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 pizza range from classic Margheritas to pies with house-smoked bacon, trugole (a subtly flavorful — fruity, not funky — Alpine cheese), and other unique toppings. Rounding things out: simple but ingenious salads, ultimate zeppoles, and Florida craft beers. \$\$ (PRB)

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 tripeta containing roast pork, bacon, Black Forest ham, provolone, and caramelized onions. \$\$ (PRB)

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 pizza like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Cronchiana. 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Kush 2003 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-4500

From the folks behind the popular Coral Gables artisanal beer pub LoKal — voted a "Most Green Restaurant in Florida" by the Nature Conservancy — Kush pushes the concept farther: that farm-to-table dishes (some from LoKal, others created new) and craft beers aren't mere craft; they're art. Which you'll find on the walls. On tables you'll find, among other things, the Kush & Hash burger: Florida-raised beef, ground in-house, served with hash (the edible, not smokable, kind), bacon, fried egg, and housemade ketchup on a waffle bun, with a side of maple syrup. Edgy enough for ya? \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

KYU 251 NW 25th St., 786-577-0150

The Asian-inspired restaurant wholly encompasses the creative vibe of the neighborhood with a raw space outfitted in murals by 2AIs, micro green centerpieces, and lots of concrete features as well as a balanced menu of wood-fired items and refreshing ingredients. Roasted cauliflower comes with goat cheese salad and shishito-herb vinaigrette; tuna tataki takes a spicy turn with fire-roasted peppers, fermented chili, and citrus; and white ponzu, green chili, and herbs accompany sliced Hamachi. There's also sweet soy and garlic short ribs, Korean fried chicken, and Thai fried rice in a stone pot. Open for brunch on Sundays. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

Lagniappe 3425 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-0108

In New Orleans, "lagniappe" means "a little extra," like the 13th doughnut in a baker's dozen. And that's what you get at this combination wine and cheese bar/backyard BBQ/entertainment venue. Choose artisan cheeses and charcuterie from the fridges, hand them over when you pay (very little), and they'll be plated with extras: olives, bread,

changing luscious condiments. Or grab fish, chicken, veggies, or steak (with salad or cornbread) from the hidden yard's grill. Relax in the comfy mismatched furniture, over extensive wine/beer choices and loud live music. No cover, no attitude. \$\$ (PRB)

Latteria Italiana 33103 NE 1st Ave. #101, 786-577-4362

Retro, charming décor meets authentic Italian food from the foodie region of Emilia-Romagna. The small menu of piadine (Italian flat-breads) and classic entrées like lasagna sticks to its roots. But homemade gelato, in flavors like Straciatella, Ferrero Rocher, and Salt & Pepper Pistachio, which includes whole pieces of pistachio, will make you want to skip straight to dessert. Niceties include a rotating inventory of imported Italian treats like cheese, pasta, and cookies. \$\$\$ (MB)

Le Chick 310 NW 24th St., 305-771-2767

Out of the ashes of Dizengoff and Federal Donuts rises Le Chick, a rotisserie-chicken spot that should hopefully avoid its neighbors' fate. While chicken is the restaurant's signature protein, it's not the only standout. A delicious Royale With Cheese is sure to please burger fanatics (and *Pulp Fiction*) fans with two hefty patties, cheddar, pickles, and secret sauce. The best value, though, is the Why Not platter that comes with all the hits: rotisserie chicken, fried chicken, pork ribs, and onion rings. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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 deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$ (PRB)

The Lunchbox 78 NW 25th St., 305-456-1677

If there was ever a restaurant that nails the hip and manufactured veneer of Wynwood, it's The Lunchbox, a funky, eco-friendly eatery offering simple rebuts of classic lunchtime favorites. Much like the



neighborhood, The Lunchbox flaunts some serious hipster thrift; reclaimed wood fixtures frame farmhouse tables sporting thrie store chairs (\$100 and they can be yours!); rom com DVDs replace traditional table numbers; and they even use buzzy, ostensibly made up catchwords like "neo-traditional" to describe the cuisine. Despite the eyeroll-inducing trendiness, the food — tapas, sandwiches, salads, and wraps, pretty standard fare — is relatively cheap for new Wynwood standards and plenty cheerful, especially the hearty salads. Counter service is particularly helpful when it comes to navigating the menu, which periodically rotates between seasons. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Mad Lab Creamery 140 NE 39th St.

Pastry chef Soraya Kilgore, known for her desserts at Alter, now has her own place dedicated to sweets: MadLab Creamery. Located in the Design District's Palm Court, the ice cream store features a wealth of Instagram-worthy creations, many of which can be adorned with your choice of over two dozen toppings. Among those toppings: sprinkles, chocolate honeycomb, and cotton candy (a must). Here, no order is complete without a Japanese cheesecake or chocolate slab. Prepare to kiss your diet goodbye. \$ (MFP)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Mason 3470 N. Miami Ave., 786-618-5150

Midtown Miami's Mason has helped end our search for great diner food. The restaurant, which is located inside the former Gigi space, is the creation of Beaker & Gray's Brian Nasajon. The chef has put together a delightful all-day menu full of modern twists on classic comfort food. On the menu are specials like oxtail pot pie and frank and beans that will make you feel right at home. Not in the mood for savory? Make room for challah French toast and Belgian waffles. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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 heavily homemade flatbreads. Cocktails feature ingredients from za'atar to salmon roe. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Miam Café & Boutique 2750 NW 3rd Ave. #21, 786-703-1451

It's hard to miss the striking striped Wynwood Building housing this indoor/outdoor café, intended as a European-style all-day breakfast-through-dinner hangout. Featuring the best locally sourced products and organic produce, the fare created by chef Gail Goetsch (ex-Yardbird and Essentia) is simple — sandwiches, salads, pastries/desserts — but as the name says, "miam" (pronounced "meeAHM", French slang for "yum"). Delicate-crust quiches, accompanied by salad, are particularly recommended. To drink: craft beers and wine plus local Eternity coffee. An integrated mini-mart features artisan foods, plus foodie gift items. \$\$ (PRB)

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink 130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Mignonette 210 NE 18th St., 305-374-4635

From Day One this Old Florida/New Orleans fusion oyster bar, from Blue Collar's chef/owner Danny Serfer and food blogger Ryan Roman, received myriad raves for its cuisine and informed service. All manner of oysters (roughly six superb selections available raw daily, and cooked choices including subtly brandy-sauced oysters Bienville), plus other superb seafood and Blue Collar's famous veggie creations — even a dynamite prime rib — is of a caliber that catalyzes its own neighborhood gentrification, rapidly. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Mike's at Venetia 555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hangout for local journalists and others who appreciate honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Mister-01 2315 N. Miami Ave., 786-991-9343

With pizza this good, it's hard to remain hidden. Mister-01, the once-secret pizzeria in a Miami Beach office building, is embracing its mainstream success with a third location — this time in Wynwood. The restaurant knows not to mess with a good thing, so expect to see all its beloved classics on the menu. The burrata and Barbara salad are still must-eats, as is the literal star of the show: the Star Luca, a star-shaped pie with spicy salami, ricotta and mozzarella. \$\$ (MFP)

Morgans Restaurant 28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but ultimate comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoestring fries that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crust and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" — definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

NOA Café 2711 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-2557

Originally just a catering company, tiny NOA (initials of Israeli-born chef/owner Adi Kafri's three daughters) gradually became a "best-kept secret" lunch spot for its budget-friendly fresh focaccia sandwiches, plus perfectly dressed full-meal MediterAsian salads. The cute Edgewater oasis now serves dinner, too. Highly recommended: the big, beautiful Middle Eastern mezze platter (with falafel balls, silky hummus, tahini, grape leaves, heaps of grilled veggies, more), or lavishly veg-studded pad Thai (with an unusual lemongrass/orange peel-spliked sauce), either enough for two to share over wine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

OTL 160 NE 40th St., 786-953-7620

Coffee, breakfast, sandwiches, and yoga, anyone? Yes, there's now such a place, and it's naturally in the Design District. OTL is an ambitious concept pushing light bites and strong coffee, courtesy of an auspiciously motley troika of influencers, including the team behind The Smile NYC, LIV impresario David Grutman, and Miami Design District braintrust Craig Robins. Coffee shops are oftentimes the beating hearts of creative hubs, and OTL is no different; expect to see plenty of over-cafeinated designers, artists, developers, and retail employees on their lunch breaks. The place is bright and clean, and could double as a white cube gallery with its pastel chairs, light wood accents, blue chip artwork, and upstairs multipurpose space reserved for performance and pop-ups. The food, while flavorful, is mildly overpriced, but it's an afterthought when you realize that good coffee has finally arrived in the Miami Design District. \$\$\$ (AM)

Ono Poké Shop 2320 N. Miami Ave., 786-955-6894

A casual, clean, and vibrant little eatery, Ono Poké Shop is the latest eatery to catch the trending "poké fever" that's hit some of Miami's most up-and-coming neighborhoods. Greatly influenced by traditional Japanese cuisine, the menu consists of fried and true combinations, such as spicy ahi tuna tossed in a spicy soy dressing, as well as flexible options to customize your own poké bowl to taste. Quality ingredients and fresh fish make for a satisfying, healthy meal when lunch o'clock rolls around. \$\$\$ (AM)

Palatino 3004 NW 2nd Ave., 786-360-5200

When longtime favorite Jamaica 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 morn-and-pop spot serves up: breakfasts like ackee and salt fish, fried dumpling and callaloo, or an egg/maple sausage/cheese grits combo; plates (with sides) of oxtails, curry goat, jerk chicken; richly crusted piquant chicken or meat patties that contend with Miami's best. Surprises include homemade pastries, and \$1 ice cream cones in tropical flavors like soursop. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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Palat Miami 4702 NE 2nd Ave., 786-953-7577

When you're craving Italian food, where do you go? Palat Miami should be on your shortlist. The neighborhood Italian-fusion restaurant is serving flavorful food that hits the spot no matter the occasion. Small bites like picuillo peppers are perfect for splitting with friends over a bottle of wine, whose budget-friendly pricing may tempt you to order a second. Larger appetites are welcome, too, and they can indulge in braised rabbit tagliatelle and other hearty items. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Prohibition 3404 N. Miami Ave., 305-438-9191

Frankly, we don't get why this expansive, high-ceilinged space with enormous front windows and open kitchen is so often described as evocative of a Prohibition-era speakeasy; ambiance here is artfully and amusingly sinful, not secretive. Fare is a fun, familiar mix of modern comfort foods (truffled lobster mac 'n' cheese, NY strip steak with truffled parmesan fries, many other items featuring truffle oil) and retro favorites like meatballs. It's simple, solid stuff served in generous portions to match the menu items that best truly evoke Prohibition times: hefty, old-fashioned, two-fisted cocktails. \$\$\$ (PRB)

R House 2727 NW 2nd Ave., 305-576-0240

A strikingly stylish restaurant that's part art gallery could be pretentious, in a still largely ungentrified area of cutting-edge artsy yet still working-class Wynwood. But modular movable walls to accommodate changing installations, and its own name make it clear the art component is a serious working gallery. Hardworking chef/owner Rocco Carulli demonstrates a locals orientation with a menu highlighted by skillfully crafted, hearty entrées (Brazilian seafood moqueta stew, coffee/chili-rubbed short ribs, sweet pea falafel) available in affordable half-portion: small plates of big food for starving artists. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Riviera Focacceria Italiana 3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-220-6251

This kitchen actually serves a full menu of specialties firmly rooted in Liguria, the northern Italian coastal region around Genoa, pesto capital of the universe. Pastas like panisotti (plump vegetarian triangles containing ricotta plus chard, spinach, and typical herbs/spices) are definitely not generically Italian. Still, the reason to come here: the variously stuffed or topped focaccias, particularly signature focaccia di Recco (a Ligurian hill town). Two ultra-thin layers (almost transparent) of light char-bubbled bread filled with imported stracchino, a mild fresh cheese like mozzarella, but swoon-inducingly oozy-soft. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Sabor a Peru 2923 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-6736

Opened many years before ceviches became a staple on every Miami hipster-bar menu, this formerly tiny family-run Peruvian place serves food that's traditional, not trendy. That includes ceviches, simple and servicable. But Sabor's strong suit — and why it has not only survived but thrived (as a recent expansion attests) — is its cooked dishes, always fresh, flavorful, and served in prodigious portions. Our personal fave: jalea (a delicately breaded, crisp-fried mix of tender marinated fish and shellfish, with yucca and criolla onion sauce); one order feeds at least three diners. Note: Open for big breakfasts, as well as lunch/dinner. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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 home-made pickles. \$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Skorpis 3252 NE 1st Ave. #107, 786-329-5905

Italian food is out, and eastern Mediterranean food is in. The former Bocce space in Midtown Miami now belongs to Skorpis, an upscale Greek eatery with a party vibe. The European-inspired décor makes this restaurant a looker, and its food is no slouch either. Mezes like roasted eggplant salad and hummus with oven baked lamb are tasty plates to share over good conversation and wine. Hungry patrons seeking a full belly can dig into larger plates like seafood casserole and porterhouse steak. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Shokudo World Resource Café 4740 NE 2nd Ave., 305-758-7782

At its former Lincoln Road location, World Resource's café was better known for people-watching than for its standard sushi/Thai menu. But as the new name signals, this relocation is a reinvention. The indoor/outdoor space is charming, but creative takes on popular pan-Asian street foods are the real draw. Travel from Japan and Thailand through Korea, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and beyond via light housemade momo, curried potato-stuffed Tibetan/Nepalese steamed dumplings; savory pulled pork buns with kimchi and crisped onions. Noodle dishes, hot or chilled, are especially appealing. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

SuViche 2751 N. Miami Ave., 305-960-7097

As its fusion name suggests, this artsy indoor/outdoor eatery doesn't merely serve a mix of Japanese sushi and Latin ceviches but a true fusion of both, largely owing to signature sauces (many based on Peru's citrusy/creamy ajevichado emulsion with Japanese spicing) that are applied to sushi rolls and ceviche bowls alike. Additionally there are some popular Peruvian-fusion cooked dishes like Chifa (Peruvian-Chinese) lomo saltado, served traditionally, as an entrée, or creatively in springs rolls. To add to the fun, accompany your meal with a cocktail from Miami's only pisco bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

St. Roch Market 140 NE 39th St.

Food halls are all the rage, and the Design District isn't missing out on the fun. St. Roch Market, the popular New Orleans multi-vendor establishment, has opened a Palm Court outpost that features something for everyone. Sushi (Itamae), fried chicken (Coop), and banh mis (Tran An) are just a few of the market's standouts, all of which pair nicely with a sazerac or another signature cocktail from St. Roch's Mayhaw bar. With so many options available, you'll quickly become a regular. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Tap 42 3252 NE 1st Ave. #101, 786-864-0194

With all the growth that Midtown Miami has seen, there's been one type of restaurant sorely missing in the neighborhood: a decent sports bar. Tap 42, which recently took over the short-lived Apeiro location, runs with this idea and complements it with a flavor-forward mentality. The eatery started as a Fort Lauderdale watering hole and has since expanded to Coral Gables — and now Midtown Miami. Staples like the Prohibition burger and Drunken Goat burger make an appearance, but so do location-specific items like the grilled salmon Zen bowl that serves as a lighter alternative for guests. \$\$ (MFP)

Tony Chan's Water Club 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scallion, ginger, cilantro, and subtly sweet/salty sauce. And Peking duck is served as three traditional courses: crêpe-wrapped crispy skin, meat sautéed with crisp veggies, savory soup to finish. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Wynwood Café 450 NW 27th St., 305-576-1105

Located inside the Wynwood Warehouse Project, an art gallery/workshop/consulting space, this alt-culture eatery is sort of a starvation-budget, working-artists' version of the Pérez Art Museum Miami's high-end café, Verde: light-bite focused, but with unbelievably low prices. Specialty is "The \$3 Sandwich," choice of quality coldcut (pastrami, salami, turkey, or ham) plus provolone, spinach, tomato, and Dijon mustard sauce. A \$5 "Monster" features three meats. Also notably tasty and cheap are coffees, desserts, and fresh-fruit smoothies (including a take on NYC's classic Orange Julius). \$ (PRB)

Wynwood Diner 2601 NW 2nd Ave., 305-747-7888

Filling a much-needed gap in the neighborhood, this quirky and expansive Wynwood-style American diner offers something for everyone at anytime (open until 1:00 a.m. on most days) from all-day breakfast to salads, burgers, chicken, and waffles, and even buffalo chicharrones. What shines here, though, are the cocktails like Peach Pie Old Fashioned and the West Side Swizzle. Hair of the dog? They do that, too. \$\$ (MFB)

Wynwood Kitchen & Bar 2550 NW 2nd Ave., 305-722-8959

The exterior is eye-popping enough, with murals from world-famous outdoor artists, but it's the interior that grabs you. Colorful and exotic work by Shepard Fairey, Christian Awe, and other acclaimed artists makes it one of the most striking restaurant spaces anywhere. As for food, the original menu has been replaced with Spanish/Latin/Mediterranean-inspired favorites from chef Miguel Aguilar (formerly of Alma de Cuba): gazpacho or black bean soups; shredded chicken ropa vieja empanadas with cilantro crema; grilled octopus skewers with tapenade; plus fingerling potato-chorizo hash and other seasonal farm-to-table veg dishes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Zak the Baker 405 NW 26th St., 786-280-0327

This part-rustic/part industrial-chic breakfast and lunch spot, located in Zak Stern's bakery, is one certified-Kosher café where neither religious dietary laws nor culinary standards are compromised. Reason: The menu of open-face sandwich "toasts," soups, salads, and small plates doesn't overreach, but stays centered on Zak's substantial and superbly crusty organic sourdough loaves, arguably the best bread in Miami. Varieties range from classic Jewish deli rye to exotic olive & za'atar or All American cranberry/walnut. Toast toppings, sweet or savory, are mainly local vegetable and dairy combos, so no non-carri-vores, as well as diners keeping Kosher, luck out. \$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

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)



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

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-garish pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

BarMeli 6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-5558

Just east of Liza Meli's defunct Ouzo's Taverna, her similarly rustic-festive tapas and wine bar/market has an extensive, mostly small-plates menu including all of Ouzo's Greatest Greek Hits (refreshingly light and lemony taramosalata carp roe spread, amazingly succulent grilled fresh sardines, her mom's lemon cake, more), plus more broadly Mediterranean creations like an Italian-inspired grano padano flan, uniquely topped crostini and flat-breads, cheese/charcuterie boards. The boutique wine selection focuses on unusual (sometimes virtually unknown, and unavailable elsewhere in town) Mediterranean varietals from family-owned vineyards. \$\$ (PRB)

The Anderson 709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

"Come for the drinks. Stay for the food." That should be the sign outside The Anderson, the neighborhood watering hole from the team behind Miami Beach's award-winning bar Broken Shaker. To complement the outstanding drink menu (which is full of South Florida-inspired concoctions), the venue offers a just-as-outstanding list of snacks and mains that includes the likes of smoked wings, queso dip, and a fried chicken sandwich. If you only order one thing, make it that last one — it's heaven on a plate. \$\$ (MFP)

Blue Collar 6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366

Like its predecessor in this space (Michael Bloise's American Noodle Bar), this working-class-themed eater is helmed by a former fine-dining chef, Daniel Serfer, a Chef Allen's vet who now crafts casual, creative fare at prices all can afford. Dishes are eclectic. The roughly dozen veggie dishes alone range from curried cauliflower purée to maduros to bleu cheese roasted asparagus. Shrimp and grits compete with any in Charleston; pork and beans, topped with a perfectly runny fried egg, beats Boston's best. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Café Roval 5808 NE 4th Ct., 786-279-6800

Café Roval's Old World flourishes set the perfect mise-en-scène for magic. Restaurateur Mark Soyka of News Café, the Van Dyke, Andiamo, and Soyka Restaurant made a bold move opening his latest restaurant in the storied pumphouse building just north of his 55th Street Station property. The subtly anachronistic décor casts an ambiance suspended in time. Coral-rock walls extend toward a beautifully vaulted ceiling in the dining room adorned with antique chandeliers. Elsewhere, quirky touches abound throughout the dining room and into the outdoor seating area. During the cooler months, dining is best experienced by candlelight on the backyard patio, comfortably nestled between lush gardens and a reflecting pool. The restaurant's menu is influenced by a savory fusion of Mediterranean, Asian, French, and American cuisine. Lots to try here, including caviar, tuna crudo, grassed lamb burgers, oxtail buns, and some vegetarian options such as sprouted chickpea cakes and the vegan dish du jour. Selections from the bar include playful cocktails eschewing liquor in favor of wine, beer, and sake. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Cake Thai Kitchen 7919 Biscayne Blvd., 305-534-7906

Helmed by a perfectionist young chef (formerly from Makoto) and his host/dessertmaker mom, this hip hole-in-the-wall serves typical Thai street food. Many dishes are astonishingly ambitious, like peanut/garlic chip/culantro sprinkled roast duck noodle with Chinese broccoli, and intense pork/fat-enriched broth. Other unique specialties include spicy house-cured pork/crispy rice sausages, soy and whiskey-marinated steak jerky, swoonfully sinful pork belly with basil sauce, and citrus/cumin-tinged fried chicken wings. Arrive early to score the wings. Surprisingly scrumptious tofu and veggie preparations, too. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Cream Parlor 8224 Biscayne Blvd., 786-534-4180

Don't let the name fool you: This eclectic eatery is a lot more than just ice cream. At this cozy neighborhood spot, you can enjoy breakfast items all day or nosh on house specialties like the grilled smashed potato — the name says it all — for lunch or brunch. Dessert is a must at Cream Parlor, and first-timers need to experience Unicorn Poop ice cream (much more appetizing than it sounds). Even if you're not hungry, stop in to admire the vintage décor and crack a smile. Check out the patio in back. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Doggy's Arepa Bar 7281 Biscayne Blvd., 786-558-9538

MiMo residents, rejoice: Doggy's Arepa Bar has brought its Venezuelan street food offerings up north. The restaurant's second location features everything that regulars have come to know and love about the place: giant portions, reasonable prices and an extensive menu. If it's your first foray into this type of cuisine, start with the shredded beef arepa — essentially a corn flour pocket of flavor. The cachapa — a corn pancake with cheese and cream — is another beloved specialty that's not to be missed. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Dogma Grill 7030 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3433

Since opening, this hot dog+PLUS (capital letters intended) joint has had several owners and menu changes. Currently it's in a "Best of" phase. Main draw remains 100% beef dogs with numerous regionally inspired topping combos (our favorite: the elaborate, authentic Chicago), but vegetarians can again enjoy the original menu's veggie franks, absent for several years, topped identically. More recent adds worth sampling are regional specialty sandwiches, like New Orleans shrimp po'boys. And though there's no indoor seating, current owner Diego Villamedici has expanded the outdoor area and spruced up its landscaping for better insulation from Boulevard traffic, making picnicking more pleasant. \$ (PRB)

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. \$ (PRB)

Ferraro's Kitchen 1095 NE 79th St., 786-534-2136

Seasoned restaurateur Igor Ferraro, who's honed his chef chops here and abroad in Italy, has opened a new eatery for those seeking two of life's tastiest pleasures: pasta and wine. The inviting dining room is also spacious, and you'll find ample room at the bar as well; saddle up to the latter for a better view of the kitchen, where Chef Ferraro is busy creating homemade pappardelle, lasagna, and other Italian classics. Complement your meal with a bottle from the expansive wine selection, then order the signature tiramisu for a sweet ending. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Flavorish Market 7283 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8787

As Zabar's reflects Manhattan's Upper Westside neighborhood, this smaller specialty foods shop is geared toward Miami's Upper Eastside lifestyle. The carefully curated stock ranges widely: upscale packaged foods; boutique wines/beers; artisanal cheeses and cured meats; cookbooks, kitchen utensils, more. But highlights are locally produced fare: Miami's famed raviolis; Roc Kat's tropical ice creams; chef/restaurateur Ken Lyon's prepared foods, including daily-changing dinners for two; Zak the Baker's crusty sourdough

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 Kotb, 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. \$\$ (PRB)

Ms. Cheezies 7418 Biscayne Blvd., 305-989-4019

This brick-and-mortar location of Miami's most awarded food truck was an expanded menu, featuring favorites like mac 'n' cheese, but what you'll mostly want is just grilled cheese. Which is a misnomer. "Just grilled cheese" sandwiches are what your mom made. Here you'll find cunning creations like Frito Pie Melts (the Southwestern classic corn chip/cheese/jalepeño/onion/chili combo, served on sourdough instead of in a Frito bag), or the Croqueta Monsieur (ham croquettes, tavern ham, Swiss cheese, béchamel). A welcome expansion: the spacious backyard, featuring lawn chairs and sizable shade trees, is definitely a more relaxed dining area than a hot sidewalk. \$\$ (PRB)

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,

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bread, plus sandwiches on same. Best-kept secret: While there's no official café component, comfy counter seats enable on-premises breakfasting, lunching, and coffee/pastry breaks. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Firito Taco 1071 NE 79th St., 305-793-6676

Nestled between Tap 79 and Royal Bavarian Schnitzel House, this low-key taco shack features two sections — one for eating and one for playing boogie. The menu is limited to ten overstuffed tacos (two per order), quesadillas, desserts like churros and paletas, and floor-to-ceiling fridges of ice-cold beer. The most popular tacos are the carne asada with tomato, onion, cheese, garlic chili aioli, and cilantro and the Tinga Club with chicken, avocado cream, bacon, tomato, queso, garlic chili aioli, and scallions. \$\$\$ (MB)

Ironside Pizza 7580 NE 4th Ct., 305-531-5055

From the team behind Brickell's upscale Toscana Divino, this casual indoor/outdoor pizzeria (hidden inside Little River's artistic Ironside complex) retains the strengths of its predecessor, Ironside Pizzeria — an award-winning Neapolitan pizzalao; mouthwatering wood-oven crusts; vegetarian/vegan and gluten-free toppings. But the expanded menu, including impeccable cured meat options, is a vast improvement. Especially recommended: housemade porchetta; nduja Calabrese (salami spread); the Regina pizza with prosciutto crudo, buffalo mozzarella, perfectly ripe tomatoes, and arugula; involtini (stuffed pizza rolls); an unusual carciofi salad with pine nuts and mint silvers. \$\$ (PRB)

Jimmy's East Side Diner 7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-3692

Open for more than 30 years and still regularly packed with locals, Jimmy's respects the most important American diner tradition: breakfast at any hour the place is open — though that's only through mid-afternoon. Menu highlights include pecan waffles, biscuits with sausage gravy, and eggs any style, from old-school western omelets to trendy frittatas. Among sides, truly crispy hash browns are neighborhood legend, with creamy grits a satisfying second. For those who like lunchier fare, hot open-faced turkey sandwiches feature the real deal, not gelatinous deli-type turkey roll. \$ (PRB)

Loba 7420 Biscayne Blvd., 786-536-6692

As suggested by this comfie gastropub's interactive literary ambiance (décor features shelves of paperbacks), the concept of young financial-analyst-turned-restaurateur Jessica Sanchez is to encourage creativity, including exploring Miami's unique culture/agriculture through food created by a staff including experienced chefs, FIU culinary students, and her mom Liliba, former owner of the traditional Colombian Patacón chain. Needless to say, the menu is eclectic, ranging from South American (the Patacón, a bandeja paisa-inspired sampler plate) to modernized Old South (MiMo Fried Chicken with crispy kale and local honey). Boredom? Impossible. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Lo De Lea 7001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-3218

In Casa Toscana's former space, this cute, contemporary panillada is proof that you can have an Argentinean meal and a cholesterol test in the same month. While traditional panillada 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 vacío (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

ing, 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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 brioche sticks 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

O Munaciello 6425 Biscayne Blvd., 786-907-4001

Neapolitan pizza is the star of the show at O Munaciello Miami, whose roots originate in Florence, Italy. The full-service restaurant and pizzeria is bright and inviting, and its menu is home to an array of pizza selections sure to please the pickiest of palates. A standout: the San Daniele, which masterfully mixes mozzarella, fresh arugula, shaved Parmesan, and cured ham. Diners not in the mood for pizza can opt for pastas like a linguine with clams or a spaghetti cacio e pepe with prawn; a small selection of meat and seafood entrées is available as well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Organic Bites 7010 Biscayne Blvd., 786-542-9654

Too often healthy eating is associated with deprivation, but not at this breakfast/lunch/dinner bistro. Co-owners Andres and Ana Reid's concept focuses mainly on people-pleasing dishes that are 100% chemical/GMO-free, not on calorie-counting. The ingenious international comfort food menu of ex-José Andres Bazaar chef Goncalo Costa does include vegetarian/vegan dishes but ranges far beyond: deceptively decadent-tasting eggs Florentine (with tomato and avocado hollandaise); Portuguese bacalhau cakes with black-eyed pea salad; big juicy certified-organic burgers with smoked truffe mozzarella on onion brioche buns, with sweet potato fries. To accompany: fresh juices or organic wines. Ambiance is kid-friendly, prices, atypical of many organic eateries, are parent-friendly. \$\$ (PRB)

Paulie Gee's Miami 8001 Biscayne Blvd.

New York City-style pizza is the stuff of culinary lore. Whether it's the flour, the mineral content, or the microscopic copepods found in NYC tap water that lend this pie its je ne sais quoi is the subject of fervent debate; but, it's safe to say that NYC-style pizza is king. Restaurants often go so far as to outsource its water to offer guests a genuine slice of the Big Apple. Paulie Gee's Miami is one such place that goes to great lengths to re-create the formidable magic of its flagship Brooklyn-based pizzeria, and the results are astounding. The pizzas are heavy on attitude: not only are the flavors bold yet balanced, the names themselves tend to be comically creative. Most of the pizzas are major hits, including the vegan pies, so much so that they render everything else on the menu a mere afterthought. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Pinch 8601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-631-2018

Small bites, big impact, hence the name. Pinch. Chef-partners Rene Reyes and John Gallo have fun with a freestyle menu incorporating the cuisines

of Asia, Italy, and Spain for an eclectic mix that is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Seared Maine scallops with piquillo sauce, parsnip, and squid ink, and Pinch Salad with brassica greens, shaved veggies, ricotta salata, and cucumber-oregano vinaigrette are served on stoneware plates. Simple items like eight-ounce flat iron steak and organic flat chicken are classic standards done right. A unique wine list takes a departure from the typical Chardonnays and Malbecs. There's also a great brunch, including brisket sliders, stuffed French toast, and eggs Benedict. \$\$\$ (MB)

Phuc Yea! 7100 Biscayne Blvd.

When renowned pop-up Phuc Yea quietly folded back in 2011, restaurateurs Ani Meinhold and Cesar Zapata refused to let their innovative "Viet-Cajun" cuisine become another Miami memory. Fast forward several years and patience has undoubtedly paid off: Phuc Yea is back, sporting a swanky new permanent home and a menu that not only expands upon but improves what the restaurant did right the first time. The new multi-story restaurant is effortlessly hip, featuring neon signs and weathered rustic wood furniture throughout. The menu leans toward smaller tapas-style plates, which are sure to infuriate Miami's gourmards, but make up for diminutive portion sizes with flavor for days. The signature Cajun woks are superb, while the smaller dishes such as the fragrant yet mild-tasting eggplant curry and the stellar "Broken Rice" — saucy caramelized pork belly served over short grain rice — are great for sampling when friends or family join in on the fun. If you order dessert, opt for the extremely popular bread pudding, or the mung bean pudding if you're feeling adventurous. \$\$\$ (AM)

Rail 71 Café 7255 NE 4th Ave. #111, 786-375-6593

Rail 71 Café is what comes to mind when you picture the ideal neighborhood spot: a place with good food and coffee, reasonable prices, a friendly staff, and an inviting ambiance. Here at Rail 71, your steak sandwiches, chicken salad wraps, and Caesar salads are served with a smile. And if you're really hungry, you can choose from an array of heftier entrées like the ocean catch (grilled mahi mahi). Just remember that they're closed on weekends. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus 1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with home-made 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Sherwood's Bistro & Bar 8281 NE 2nd Ave., 786-359-4030

Little Haiti isn't exactly known for its culinary options, but the new food hall at The Citadel will change that perception by year's end. Until then, Sherwood's Bistro & Bar is doing its part in filling the neighborhood's void. Expect larger-than-life plates like rabbit pot pie, gnocchi with oxtail ragu, and bouillabaisse at this comfort-food-centric restaurant. The word "home" immediately comes to mind: Sherwood's could literally be someone's house (we're fairly certain it was), and the fascinating design just adds to the eatery's allure. With convenient parking all around, there's no reason not to visit. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Soyka 5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Mark Soyka's namesake restaurant has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival, providing the neighborhood's first comfortably gentrified gathering place — and simple but satisfying comfort food. Old fans needn't fret; the signature hummus platter remains, but much of the menu, like the neighborhood, is more sophisticated, with fare ranging from shareable snacks (fried Brussels sprouts with pecorino and parsley, smoked salmon/dill deviled eggs) and salads (mango/quinoa with almonds) to hearty retro-modern entrées (slow-roasted short ribs with balsamic/fig reduction). \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Tap 79 1071 NE 79th St., 305-381-0946

One-time fine-dining chef Alfredo Patino, whose still thriving wine/tapas bar Bin No. 18 was one of the first chef-owned restaurants to bring casual culinary sophistication to the downtown/midtown Biscayne Corridor, does the same for still-transitional 79th Street with this convivial gastropub, which has a similar shareable-plates menu, but built more around beer than wine pairings. Highlights range from carefully curated, imported charcuterie/cheese plates to fun chef-driven items: house-cured beef jerky, brown sugar/ginger-marinated salmon "Scooby Snacks," hearty Coke-braised short ribs with sweet corn polenta and pungent Junetag blue cheese. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Terramia 4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-801-1854

Italian restaurants are a dime a dozen in Miami, but Terramia aims to be a cut above the rest. One way it succeeds is through its diverse menu. Upon first glance, it's a lot to take in. Fortunately, the restaurant makes your decision easy by touting its wood-oven pizza above all. The al forno — a mix of mozzarella, provolone cheese, smoked bacon, and bell peppers — and its cheesy brethren come out fast and ready for their Instagram closeup. Save some calories for dessert: There are more than ten to choose from. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Winewood 7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

Along the Upper Eastside's Biscayne Corridor best known for its historic MiMo architecture, this darkly wooden and quirky neighborhood wine bar stands out. Although a lucky few will appreciate the tiny rustic dining area, the majority of guests will sit outdoors at the mercy of Miami's grueling summer heat. The menu leans heavily upon Argentinean staples and Italian cuisine, echoes of Devita's Restaurant and Che Soprano, which previously occupied this space. Entrées such as lomito, seafood tablas, and

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fresh pastas and stuffed raviolis are generously portioned and delicious. Exploring the wine menu will take patience as the list promotes a thoughtfully diverse terroir from regions all over the world. Those reeling from weekend withdrawal can opt for a glass of wine with a side of live entertainment beginning Tuesday through Saturday. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Via Verdi Cucina Rustica 6900 Biscayne Blvd., 786-615-2870

After years of critical acclaim cooking the cuisine of their native Piedmont, ultra-upscale Quattro, on Lincoln Road, twin brother chefs Nicola and Fabrizio Carro decided to work for themselves, hands-on renovating the former space of MiMo District pioneer Uva 69. Cuisine here is similarly authentic, with creative twists. But there are important differences: emphasis on local, rather than mostly imported, ingredients; inspiration from all Italian regions; and best, astonishing affordability. Housemade spinach/ricotta gnudi baked in an ocean of burrata is a delight, but it's hard to go wrong here. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Wabi Sabi by Shuji 851 NE 79th St., 305-707-4060

Hurricane Irma closed many local businesses for good. Among them was Dashi, a stellar Asian eatery in Brickell. Since Dashi's closure, chef Shuji Hiyakawa has opened Wabi Sabi by Shuji, a more casual affair dedicated to bowls. Here diners pick their base for one of Shuji's specialty creations, which can include proteins like tuna, crab, and salmon. The chasoba noodles are a favorite, and something that Dashi guests will immediately recognize. Feeling adventurous? Take a look at the board specials—you won't regret it. \$\$ (MFP)

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

222 Taco 1624 79th St. Cswy., 833-222-8226

At first glance, the menu at North Bay Village's 222 Taco may look like that of your standard taco joint. But a deeper dive into the selections reveals more than just tacos, quesadillas, and other traditional fare. "Coco-Ceviche" and Mexican pizza are just a few tasty ways that 222 Taco is making a name for itself. Larger parties can opt for a one-pound all pastor taco platter and other affordable family-style options. Fun fact: They also serve breakfast. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Black Sheep 1884 79th St. Causeway, 305-763-8468

From the masterminds of Morgans in Wynwood comes this snug eatery that serves an all-day menu full of comfort food favorites. Blink, and you'll miss this intimate addition to North Bay Village's dining scene: The only signage outside is the restaurant's namesake animal. Starting at 9:00 a.m. every day, you can indulge in sizeable brunch dishes like the Dutch Baby and the chicken and waffle, which pack as much flavor as they do calories. Lunch and dinner entrées like the duck tacos and short rib pot pie are just as filling. Here, your diet starts tomorrow. \$\$ (MFP)

Oggi's Caffè 1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shiitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Sandwich Where? 36 NE 54th St., 786-419-2772

Don't let the cute name fool you. Sandwich Where? takes its namesake item seriously. The homey shop offers tasty sandwiches at affordable prices—a lunch special with half a hoagie, chips, and a drink will set you back roughly \$6. That's a bargain, as are their regular sandwich offerings like prosciutto mozzarella, turkey and brie, and soppressata. Pair one with a delectable smoothie like the Tevez (pineapple, orange, and raspberry), and you have yourself a great lunch. \$ (MFP)

Shuckers Waterfront Grill 1819 NE 79th St. Cswy., 305-866-1570

Sometimes accidents can lead to better things. Case in point, this North Bay Village waterfront institution is back with their casual, no-fuss service, cheap beer, special grilled wings (that require no sauce), and raw oysters. The revamped space makes the entire experience just a little fresher and a little happier. Speaking of happy, their happy hour deals are still as good as ever. \$\$ (MB)

Sushi Siam 1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing) (PRB)

Tacos vs Burritos Cantina 1888 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-2096

When you pit tacos against burritos, everyone wins. Despite its competitive name, Tacos vs Burritos Cantina shows equal love to both culinary vessels. In fact, diners will find a lot more than just tacos and burritos: tostadas, quesadillas, and tortas can also be filled with your protein of choice. While you could load up on the usual suspects like carne asada and chorizo, you're better off being adventurous and going for less traditional (and harder-to-find) fillings like tongue and tripe. \$ (MFP)

NORTH BEACH

Café Prima Pasta 414 71st St., 305-867-0106

Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? Opened in 1993 (with 28 seats), the Cea family's now-sprawling trattoria has added inventive chef Carlos Belon and modern menu items, including flocchi rapera (pear/cheese-filled pasta purses with truffled prosciutto cream sauce), an unlikely (soy sauce and parmesan cheese?) but luscious Italian/Japanese fusion tuna carpaccio, and fresh-fruit sorbets. But traditionalists needn't worry. All the old favorites, from the café's famed beef carpaccio to eggplant parm and pastas sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence, are still here and still satisfying. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet 9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012

When it comes to Miami's dining scene, neighborhoods like Wynwood and Brickell tend to get all of the attention. Côte Gourmet, however,

is putting Miami Shores on the map. This locals spot specializes in appetizing French cuisine, such as staples like escargots and foie gras. Brunch is a highlight, featuring more casual cuisine like crêpes and a decadent croque madame to fill you up. Regardless of whether you visit for brunch, lunch, or dinner, expect reasonable prices, service with a smile, and oh-so-satisfying food. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

PizzaFiore 9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924

Owned by Aroub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crusted, oozing-with-goosey-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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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Basilic Vietnamese Grill 14734 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-0577

Those who say great pho is few and far between are in for a treat: Basilic Vietnamese Grill offers a stunning take on the subtle majesty of this humble noodle soup. It June be enough for some restaurants to rest on the laurels of one spectacular dish, but brothers and co-owners John, Chuck, and Vince Vu aim for the bleachers, offering a broad selection of delicious contemporary and traditional Vietnamese foods that aim to please. The bahn mi sandwich is only served during lunch, but is alone well worth the trip to this wonderful addition to North Miami. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Bagels & Co. 11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435

While this place is often referred to as Guns & Bagels, one can't actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$ (PRB)

Barok Café 12953 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-0002

Barok Café forgoes the usual pomp of upscale eateries and focuses on simple, delicious, and effective French cuisine. The middling décor and surrounding sunbleached strip malls leave something to be desired, but all is easily excused when the food is this good. The morel dishes—large, spongy mushrooms in a fragrant sauce served with meat or pasta—steal the show, and are worth the considerable uptick in price. Meanwhile, everything from the pasta to the seafood is fresh, and the service makes up for its slight inattentiveness with affability and charm. The wine menu, while diminutive, is diverse enough to pair well with the meats, pastas, and sauces with aplomb. Considering the quality of the food, Barok Café is a bona fide sleeper hit. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Café Crème 750 NE 125th St., 786.409.3961

You don't have to circle the world in search of sweet and savory treats from the City of Lights. Situated adjacent to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Café Crème is a French bistro helmed by Buena Vista Café proprietors Claude Postel and Cory Finot. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, their selection of tartines, croissants, soups, salads, and daily quiches won't disappoint diners seeking simple dishes in this spacious and welcoming dining room. Service is attentive and friendly, allowing you plenty of space to linger over your velvety latte. A word of caution: Those with an indomi-

chelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

KC Healthy Cooking 11900 Biscayne Blvd. #103, 786-502-4193

Hidden inside an office building across from Home Depot, this family-friendly spot has no fancy features—such as a sign outside. But walk through the corporate lobby and you'll find truly heartfelt, health-conscious, home-made dishes, some surprisingly sophisticated. There's no red meat on the globally influenced menu, but there are poultry and fish, along with many vegetarian or vegan choices: organic pumpkin soup, zingy Thai curried vegetable soup, an elegantly layered, molded tuna/avocado/quinoa "cupcake," a real Bundt cake—vegan (no dairy) but remarkably tasty. \$\$ (PRB)

Pastry Is Art 12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045

Given owner Jenny Rissoné's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste—perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$ (PRB)

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 chamer 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Piccolo Pizza 2104 NE 123rd St., 305-893-9550

Pizzas at this spin-off from family-owned Il Piccolo impress even NYC visitors, thanks to recipes proprietor Hubert Benmoussa learned from an authentic Neapolitan pizzaolo. Other favorites here include subs on homemade baguettes and, surprising for a pizzeria, delightfully custardy quiche (Benmoussa is part French). But it would be unthinkable to miss the pies, especially our favorite Italia: subtly sweet tomato sauce, fresh tomatoes, mozzarella, onions, plus mixed greens and uncooked prosciutto on top—both pizza and salad. There are also nicely priced catering trays of finger subs, quiche squares, pizza bites, more. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Pinecrest Bakery 13488 Biscayne Blvd., 305-912-4200

Pinecrest Bakery has opened up shop in North Miami and brought an extensive selection of Cuban specialties to the other side of town. As you'd expect, pastelitos, empanadas, and other traditional delights are on the menu, but the bakery also doubles as a café. This means you'll also find sandwiches galore, including staples like the Cuban sandwich (ham, pork, Swiss cheese, pickle) as well as Philly cheesesteaks and turkey melts. And of course, there's no shortage of cafeito. \$ (MFP)

Ricky Thai Bistro 1617 NE 123rd St., 305-891-9292

Named after the Thai/Italian owners' son, this "best kept secret" neighborhood eatery is regularly packed by food-savvy locals for good reason: Southeast Asian herbs grown right outside the bistro, plus locally made rice noodles and precision cooking make the Thai fare among the most sparkling fresh, and authentically spiced/spicy in town. Must-haves include Pad Kee Mow (called "drunken noodles," but a more accurate translation is "drunkard's noodles," for their assertive and alcohol-free chili/ basil flavoring); duck or whole hog snapper, both crisp outside, juicy inside; succulently sour ground beef larb salad. Portions are unusually generous. \$\$ (PRB)

Sergio's Cuban Café + Grill 1821 NE 123rd St., 305-702-7211

Abuela's Cuban cooking can make us feel all warm and fuzzy. Unfortunately, it can also make us fat. Enter Sergio's Cuban Café + Grill, a somewhat healthier approach to the beloved cuisine. Guests can create their own bowls and add healthy mix-ins like lean ground turkey and cauliflower rice for a satisfyingly "skinny" meal. Of course, the usual suspects like the Cuban sandwich and even a Cuban cheesesteak make an appearance for those not watching their waistline. \$ (MFP)

Steve's Pizza 12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202

At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paperthin 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 pizza 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. \$ (PRB)

Sushi Lucy 1680 NE 123rd St., 786-391-2668

One of the worst parts about dining out is the wait. At North Miami's Sushi Lucy, waiting for your food is a foreign concept. The Asian eatery sends out items by the boatload—literally—so guests pick out their dishes as they pass by on a conveyor belt. If you're not in the mood for sushi, rest assured you won't leave hungry. Hot kitchen entrées like the shrimp dumplings, salmon rice bowls, and chicken skewers round out the establishment's extensive menu. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Tatore 15180 Biscayne Blvd., 305-749-6840

Meet the fugazzeta, a regional Argentinian specialty that is essentially a white pizza with mozzarella, onions, and oregano. And although simple, it's hard to come by in town. FYI: You can find it here. An ample outdoor space is popular on the cooler days, and inside, the great red oven takes center stage. You can go traditional with your pizza or try the Nicanora, which has caramelized onions and bacon. The restaurant opens early enough to serve the breakfast of champions—empanadas. \$\$\$ (MB)

Tomato & Basil 653 NE 125th St., 305-456-1193

This rustic Italian eatery with reds, whites, and lots of light wood, will instantly transport you to the carefree streets of Italy. Vespa included—so will the thin pizza, creamy polenta, and carefully curated wine list. Their complimentary rolls with homemade tomato sauce are extra heavenly. Delivery available, but if you decide to dine in, there is plenty of free parking. \$\$ (MB)

Top Notch Bistro 2210 NE 123rd St., 786-452-0398

Bolivian food is hard to find in Miami, but Top Notch Bistro does its part to fill that void—and then some—by mixing it with American influences. Saltenas, the eatery's Bolivian baked empanadas, are an essential starter for any order. From there, you can pick from an extensive selection of

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gourmet hot sandwiches, juicy burgers, and big platters with proteins like beef medallions and pulled pork. Wash all of that down with their craft beer selection, which leans local. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Urbano Steak House 2114 NE 123rd St., 786-637-7711

If you're vegetarian, Urbano Steak House is not for you; the "Let's Eat Meat" sign inside this Argentinian establishment is a dead giveaway. Once you sit down, you'll see a variety of different cuts on the menu along with native staples like empanadas and sweetbreads. There are non-carnivore options, but you're not here for a salad. Instead, get the "parillada" — the gigantic meat platter comes with steak, short rib, blood sausage, and an assortment of other proteins. Good luck finishing it by yourself. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Whole Foods Market 12150 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-5500 (See Brickell / Downtown listing)

Vicky Bakery 1973 NE 163rd St., 305-816-6197

This beloved Cuban bakery recently opened a new location in North Miami, and — judging by its long lines around the clock — it's already a neighborhood hit. To keep your wait time to a minimum, stop in right when they open or at an off time after lunch. Otherwise you'll likely run into other hungry diners clamoring for guava-filled pastries and other Cuban fare. Then again, Vicky Bakery's hefty breakfast special (Cuban toast, coffee, two eggs, ham or bacon, and fries) and pan con lechon (pork sandwich) are well worth braving the crowds any time of day. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Zaika Indian Cuisine 2176 NE 123rd St., 786-409-5187

This friendly and dateworthy-cute spot features "Modern Indian" cuisine — both North Indian-type traditional favorites interpreted without the oiliness and heavy sauces typical of westernized curry houses, plus refined reinventions using authentic (though heat-adjustable) spicing in original creations and/or less familiar South Indian coastal dishes: coconut-rich Konkani fish curry, irresistible lasooni jhinga (yogurt/garlic-marinated char-grilled shrimp). Vegetarian dishes featuring paneer cheese are outstanding, but even samosas sparkle, with peas still popping-fresh. Multi-course lunch specials (\$9-\$13) — custom-cooked, not old steam-table buffet stuff — are a terrific deal. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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, Juneo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Bay Harbor Bistro 1023 Kane Concourse, 305-866-0404

Though small, this ambitious European/American fusion bistro covers all the bases, from smoked salmon eggs Florentine at breakfast and elaborate lunch salads to steak frites at dinner, plus tapas. As well as familiar fare, you'll find atypical creations: caramelized onion and goat cheese garnished leg of lamb sandwiches; a layered crab/avocado tortino; pistachio-crusted salmon. A welcome surprise: The bistro is also a bakery, so don't overlook the mouthwateringly buttery croissants, plumply stuffed empanadas, or elegant berry tarts and other homemade French pastries. \$\$\$ (PRB)

O'Lima Signature Cuisine 1052 Kane Concourse, 305-864-4392

From the moment you enter the dining area to the first bite of the irresistible lomo saltado flambéed in pisco, everything about this upscale Peruvian fusion eatery exudes an understated elegance. The food, a confluence of classic Peruvian cuisine with Japanese zest, tastes just as good as it sounds (delicious). All of the classics from both regions are here — saltados, ceviches, and sushi — modified slightly to incorporate some experimental flavors. Since it's within proximity of ritzy Bal Harbour, the meals are priced slightly higher than your typical casual Peruvian joint. However, considering the atmosphere and chef German Gonzalez's expertise, O'Lima manages to outshine its peers and justify costing a prettier than average penny. \$\$\$ (AM)

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 dairy pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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 perennal 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Aji Caribón 16978 NE 19th Ave., 786-955-6894

Embracing a decidedly contemporary take on traditional Peruvian dishes, Aji Caribón serves up tacu tacu, rice lomos, and chaufas, risot, soups, and salads with an artful twist. Among the many standout entrées is the arborio, made with rocoto sauce and panko shrimp, embellished with a surprisingly welcome drizzle of sweet passion fruit reduction. Fans of Peru's most treasured seafood treat, ceviche, will appreciate the variety: in addition to the traditional leche de tigre, guests can sample ceviches made with various sauces, including rocoto, yellow pepper, and cilantro. \$\$\$ (AM)

The Alchemist 17830 W. Dixie Hwy., 786-916-3560

It's impossible to walk into The Alchemist without smiling. The café is gorgeous, with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating for all, including pets. Inside, the coffee shop lives up to its name with cool containers and quirky art that befitt a mad scientist's office. Open-face sandwiches and pizzettas make up most of the menu, which also includes risotto, escargot, and other fun items not typically found at your usual java joint. Plus, there's beer and wine for unwinding. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Campania Coal Fired Pizza 3861 NE 163rd St., 305-940-5200

Coal-fired pizza is no stranger to South Florida, but Campania certainly is. The New York-based chain has opened its first Florida location in North Miami Beach, and the outpost does its upstate brethren justice with 12-inch pies that run the gamut from savory to downright indulgent. The Lombarda — a prosciutto and truffle oil creation — meets the latter criteria, while the Torino with fresh mozzarella, olive oil, and fresh lemon juice is every bit as delicious but a little less decadent. Prefer something less filling? There's a wealth of antipasti and sandwiches from which to choose. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Chef Rolf's Tuna's Seafood Restaurant 17850 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-0630

Known for decades as simply Tuna's, this indoor/outdoor eatery, combining a casual vibe with some surprisingly sophisticated food, now has a name recognizing the culinary refinements introduced by Rolf Fellhauer, for 28 years executive chef at Continental fine-dining spot La Paloma. Additions to the predominantly seafood menu include chateaubriand or rack of lamb for two, both carved, with old-school spectacle, tableside. Owner Michael Choido has also renovated the interior dining room, and added the Yellowfin Lounge, which features an extensive selection of artisan beers. \$\$\$ (PRB)

CY Chinese 1242 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3838

Szechuan cuisine is a fascinating and sometimes polarizing art — not

corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Ginza Japanese Buffet 16153 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-2192

Highlighting the lunch and dinners spreads at this all-you-can-eat Japanese buffet are a hibachi station (where chefs custom-cook diners' choice of seafood or meat), plus many types of maki rolls and individual nigiri sushi, both featuring a larger variety of seafood than at many sushi bars — not just salmon and tuna but snapper, escolar, surf clam, snow crab, and more. But there are also steam-tabled hot Japanese and Chinese dishes; an array of cold shellfish and salads with mix-and-match sauces; and desserts. Selections vary, but value-for-money is a given. \$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

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



everyone is a fan of the pain wrought from the distinctive mouth-numbing heat. But if spicy pain is the name of your game, there's plenty of joy to be found at CY Chinese, a worthy Chinese restaurant specializing in regional southwestern cuisine with a kick. Dishes range from typical Chinese fare (dumplings, egg rolls, pork, and duck served a million-and-one different ways) to exotic (signature dry pots, Szechuan dishes) to adventurous cuisine (tip: don't order the mung bean jelly if you're on a date, and if you don't already know and love tripe, you might want to pass). All of the dishes sampled were delicious and unequivocally authentic, although perhaps a little bit too oily. All meals can be made to taste, so specify how much salt, oil, and spice you'd prefer with your server while ordering. If you can excuse the shabby interior and idiosyncratic yet strangely charming table service, the real deal is waiting for you at CY Chinese. \$\$\$ (AM)

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 — fringing the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Eat Green 14881 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-6006

What does it take to be the most eco-friendly, health conscious, and accessible restaurant in the city? Eat Green, a minuscule blip relegated to the sidelines of Biscayne Commons shopping plaza, June have the answers. Tiny but beautiful in a sleek minimalist way, Eat Green deserves credit for its thoughtful design: sustainable bamboo decor, pleasant lighting, and chemical-free diningware make eating clean seem like an infinitely more attractive proposal. Expect standard organic and farm-raised fare, including salads, wraps, quesadillas, soups, cold-pressed juices, and coffee. While this June seem like more of the same, it's in no way disappointing, and should be noted that everything not only tastes good, but is affordable, too. Eat Green succeeds at paying respect to the earth while soothing the body, soul, and wallet with equal aplomb. \$\$\$ (AM)

El Gran Inka 3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de

usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. Servers will also steer you to the good stuff, once you convince them you're not a chop suey kinda person. \$\$ (PRB)

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, house-made from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagiole, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Lettuce & Tomato 17070 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-760-2260

Despite its inauspicious location, this unassuming gastropub is a certified gem, priding itself on using fresh, seasonal ingredients to create inspired takes on salads, sandwiches, burgers, and gourmet bites. An earnest labor of love for husband and wife team Roy and Agostina Starobinsky, this cozy spot presents a thoughtful selection of flavorful offerings, including a quinoa cremosa adorned with truffle oil and microgreens, a house-cured salmon tosta, braised pork belly buns, and grilled octopus. Drink selections include a Tokyo Bloody Mary, mimosas, and a delightfully satisfying Asian take on a classic mojito, made with sake instead of traditional rum. Lettuce & Tomato deserves credit for crafting an unpretentious menu that doesn't skimp on quality or inventiveness. A most welcome surprise. \$\$ (AM)

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 homogenous. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Merkado 31 by Cholo's 1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Merkado 31 is a welcome update to the Peruvian spot formerly known as Cholo's Ceviche & Grill. Apart from its spiffy new digs, there's a new menu, including an entire section called Mercado Green, aimed at healthy eaters, vegetarians, and vegans — the citrusy quinoa is a must-try. But if you're looking for something a little more traditional, the piled-high causas and Ceviche Clasico are mainstays. \$\$\$ (MB)

Moon Thai Intracoastal Mall 3455 NE 163rd St., 305-974-5129

The original Moon Thai opened in Coral Gables in 2000, and the restaurant has since expanded with Kendall, Coral Springs, and Weston locations (to name a few). One of its newest outposts is in North Miami Beach, where guests can dig into a variety of Thai and Japanese specialties. Whether you choose the organic Japanese menu or the organic Thai menu, there's no shortage of options for any palate. If you're only a little bit hungry, then the à la carte seafood selections are the way to go. Otherwise, the noodles and curries are your best bets. \$\$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

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 chill-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Paquito's 16265 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas — spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$\$ (PRB)

PhoMi2Go 17010 W. Dixie Hwy., 786-916-2790

Run — don't walk — to this hidden North Miami Beach gem that boasts a bevy of Vietnamese staples like pho and bahn mis. Given the name, such selections should come as no surprise. What is surprising, though, is the pricing. The majority of items cost less than \$10, but their quality warrants a higher valuation. No meal here is complete without an order of 5-spice chicken wings or egg rolls, either of which can be had for less than a Lincoln. \$ (MFP)

Siam Square 54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

This 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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Tania's Table 18685 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-932-9425

A location at the tail end of a tiny, tired-looking strip mall makes this weekday lunch-only kosher eatery easy to miss. But the cute bistro, an extension of chef Tania Sigal's catering company, is well worth seeking for its unusually varied daily-changing menus — not just familiar Eastern European-derived dishes (chicken matzoh

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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. \$\$ (PRB)

The Tuck Room 3701 NE 163rd St., 786-563-7061

The dinner-and-movie experience just got a whole lot better with luxe iPic Theater's in-house eatery at the Intracoastal Mall. "Souful social plates" of croquettes, charcuterie boards, sliders, and other little bites will leave you full but not bloated, and are good for sharing with a small group. Outfitted in gray, orange, and white, it has an overall lounge atmosphere, true to Miami fashion. Cocktails are the main draw here, and they have them in a variety of options — cocktails on draft, bottled cocktails, liquid nitrogen bottle service, and even a guarapo machine that makes fresh sugar cane juice for the mojitos. Open to the public. Movie tickets not required. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

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-crazed six-year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Beach Bar

16501 Collins Ave., 305-949-1300

For a beach resort town, Miami has surprisingly little waterfront dining, ocean or bay. But it doesn't get anymore waterfront than this indoor/outdoor restobar; in fact, part of it is actually several feet over the Atlantic, on Newport Pier. Fare includes the oysters and other raw bar selections beach-minded diners crave, but gets more ambitious with two veteran chefs and a two-pronged menu: Mike Jin's sushi/sashimi/Asian small plates, and modernized retro-American dishes (ranging from cracked conch po'boys to surf and turf featuring a Ritz cracker crumb-stuffed lobster tail) from Joseph Whitmore. Big cocktail fun, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Biella Ristorante

17082 Collins Ave, 305-974-0174

Romantic dates and family outings are just a few of the situations where a visit to Biella Ristorante is a good idea. This Sunny Isles Beach restaurant welcomes patrons with a vast menu of high-quality Italian favorites. Harissa tuna tartare and beef carpaccio are notable starters that prepare the palate for an onslaught of fun flavors. Entrées like Biella's pear ravioli and black truffle risotto are full of said flavors, and a dessert menu featuring tiramisù, gelato, and more ensures a memorable evening. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Chayhana Oasis

250 Sunny Isles Blvd., 305-917-1133

Sampling traditional Uzbeki cuisine brings to mind a confluence of several Eastern styles, including the best flavors from Turkish, Russian, and Chinese cooking, cherry-picked and mixed to surprising effect. Chayhana Oasis, a bold mid-size restaurant that manages to look opulent without seeming gaudy, showcases Uzbekistan's diverse cultural heritage in its food, which has a comforting, understated simplicity to it. Vegetarians might have trouble navigating the menu, which skews heavily in favor of carnivorous appetites. If you're game for a meaty dish, try the deliciously authentic pilaf, the Eastern salad made with cucumbers and fried beef, the lamb filled Manty dumplings, and any one of the many kebabs. Service is also friendly and above average. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (AM)

Copper Chimney

18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075

At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation — plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazaz-e-lazzat (sundried tomato-stuffed paneer/potato dumplings in smooth cream sauce). \$\$\$ (PRB)

Fresh American Bistro

17315 Collins Ave., 786-923-9305

This stylish French nouvelle restaurant in the swanky Solé on the Ocean Resort and Spa bears the earmarks of excellence, particularly when it comes to Chef Phillip Ruiz, formerly of the sublimely posh Palme d'Or. Presentation is everything here: from the décor to the sultry lighting to the plated dinners, everything appears thoroughly well considered. The food, which includes surf and turf, burgers, sandwiches, flatbreads, and more, leans heavily on "comfort" rather than "gastronomic sophistication," which is surprising considering Chef Ruiz's Michelin star-studded pedigree. After moving to Solé, a slice of paradise replete with some truly breathtaking waterfront vistas, who can blame Chef Ruiz for introducing a little comfort into his repertoire? \$\$\$ (AM)

Il Mulino New York

17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191

If too much is not enough for you, this majorly upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food — fried zucchini coins, salami, bruschetta with varying toppings, a wedge of quality parmigiano, garlic bread — that ordering off the menu seems superfluous. But mushroom raviolis in truffle cream sauce are irresistible, and perfectly tenderized veal parmesan, the size of a large pizza, makes a great take-out dinner...for the next week. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Mozart Café

18110 Collins Ave., 305-974-0103

This eatery (which serves breakfast as well as lunch and dinner) is a kosher dairy restaurant, but not the familiar Old World type that used to proliferate all over New York's Lower Eastside Jewish community. Décor isn't deli but modern-artsy, and the food is not blintzes, noodle kugel, etc., but a wide range of non-meat items from pizzas to sushi. Our favorite dishes, though, are Middle Eastern-influenced, specifically Yemenite malawach (paratha-type flatbread sandwiches, savory or sweet), and shaksuka (nicknamed "eggs in purgatory"; the spicy egg-plant version will explain all). \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Sumo Sushi Bar & Grill

17630 Collins Ave., 305-682-1243

Sushi June will 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 Juneo, topped with rich scallop-studded "dynamite" sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Sushi Zen & Izakaya

18090 Collins Ave, 305-466-4663

In an area with no lack of Chinese, Japanese, and Thai cuisine, it's hard for yet another Asian restaurant to stand out. But Sushi Zen &



izakaya succeeds by offering variety — and lots of it. Name any traditional dish, and they probably have it here: ramen, fish balls, udon, pad thai, tuna poke ... the list goes on (and on). Don't miss their Japanese lunch specials. At \$12-\$14 for a sizable Bento Box, you'll leave with your stomach and wallet full. \$\$ (MFP)

Timo

17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008

Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannelloni bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignolias and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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 bum-bubbled, traditional (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. \$\$ (PRB)

Araxi Burger

17861 Biscayne Blvd., 305-952-3143

If you're in Aventura and find yourself craving a burger, head to Araxi Burger. The low-key restaurant is a burger fanatic's paradise: There are 20 bun-and-patty combos to choose from, including a Greek burger with lamb and tzatziki sauce as well as a Venezuelan burger with garlic mayo and fried egg. Although it's easy to stuff your face with a burger and Araxi's signature BBQ chicken wings, you'll want to save some room for their decadent hazelnut and red velvet milkshakes. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd., 305-935-4029

One word: flags. 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 flags 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. \$\$ (PRB)

Bonefish Grill

18713 Biscayne Blvd., 305-682-2340

Like other recently opened locations of the popular Tampa-founded Bonefish chain, this one features modernized décor (still casual/comfie, though less rustic, more hip), but the familiar core menu of precision-cooked seafood that's impeccably fresh, but sourced globally, not locally. And here, that's a good thing. For proof, try seasonal (somewhere) specials like indulgent Greenland turbot or steelhead, a richly salmonlike yet delicate western river trout; these come in cheffie preparations, or are simply wood-grilled to subtly smoky succulence and served with choice of skillfully balanced sauces. Naturally, old signatures like bang-bang shrimp remain, and remain irresistible. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Bourbon Steak

19999 W. Country Club Dr. (Turnberry Isle Miami), 786-279-0658

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. \$\$\$\$\$ (PRB)

Christine Lee's

653 900 Silks Run Rd. (Gulfstream Park), 954-457-6255

From the Golden Strand Hotel to a Sunny Isles strip mall and now the race-track, this iconic restaurant has been revived by Christine Lee's daughter Mary. With floor-to-ceiling windows, intricate Dale Chihuly chandeliers, and comfy leather seating, the restaurant overlooks all the action. And while the menu offers Continental options and sushi, stick to the Chinese fare — house specialties are the spare ribs and dumplings. Wash it all down with their signature Lycheetini. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MB)

Corsair

19999 W. Country Club Dr. (Turnberry Isle Resort) 786-279-8000

Si Bon
Happy hour Tues. – Fri. 4 to 7pm
Glass of wine or beer served with a chef's special board: \$12
Wednesday: Mussels Day
Large serving of Prince Edward Island mussels with glass of house wine, Pinot Noir or Pinot Grigio: \$24
Breakfast and Brunch
Sat. – Sun. 8am – 4pm. Complimentary mimosa.
Biscayne Boulevard at NE 24th Street | 786-615-4820
Tues. - Fri. 11 am - 11 pm, Sat. 8 am - 11 pm, Sun. 8 am - 4 pm

Celeb chef Scott Conant has moved on, but Corsair remains a lively place. Lately they've been promoting their Saturday and Sunday brunches, every week of the year, along with special events tied to holidays. But any day of the week, the restaurant's patio is the place to be, with its sweeping views of Turnberry Isle's lushly landscaped golf course. Full review coming soon. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

CVI.CHE 105

19565 Biscayne Blvd., 786-516-2818

CVI.CHE 105 has made its way up north, opening a location inside Aventura Mall's latest expansion. This is the Peruvian brand's third restaurant, and it follows a tried-and-true formula: "Don't mess with a good thing." The ceviches, tiraditos, and other Peruvian fare that diners have fallen in love with are available here, including the ever-popular lomo saltado. The one major difference: Diners up north no longer have to make the trek to Brickell or Miami Beach. \$\$ (MFP)

Dr. Smood

19501 Biscayne Blvd., 786-334-4420

It's no secret that dining out adds up — both in terms of calories and costs. Dr. Smood is focused on controlling the former by providing customers with "Smart Food for a Good Mood." That healthy motto has gotten the company far. This beautiful Aventura branch follows successful openings in Wynwood and South Miami. While Dr. Smood is mostly known for its juices and detox programs, this branch at Aventura Mall also provides visitors with grab-and-go grub befitting its setting. The free wireless internet here is the icing on the cake. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Etzel Itzik

18757 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-937-1546

Though this homey kosher oldtimer, self-described as a deli but really more of an Israeli/Middleteranean restaurant (think kebab on pita, not pastrami on rye), opened in 1997, it's still something of a locals' secret due to its location in a nondescript strip mall. But it's worth seeking out even by diners not restricted by religious laws; food is both highly flavorful and hugely fun — starting with the array of free veg appetizers that appear before you even order: herbed chickpeas, pickled salads, more. Especially recommended: shakshuka (eggs poached in complexly spiced and spicy chunky tomato sauce), a breakfast dish but available later, too. \$\$\$ (PRB)

Frankey's

900 Silks Run Rd. (Village at Gulfstream Park), 954-464-2333

To describe this casually comfie restaurant (located in Gulfstream racetrack's shopping/entertainment complex) as "a new breed of sports bar," as its own ads do, is an understatement. Take Frankey's drippingly juicy burgers. Not only is the beef from cattle grass-fed-and-finished (both healthier and more richly flavorful than typical grass-fed/grain-finished feedlot cattle), but grown by Gulfstream's owner Frank Stronach on his own Florida farm — rare sourcing even for farm-to-table indie gastropubs, much less a mega-mall eatery. Also irresistible on

the full menu of favorites: poutine, Canadian-style fries with bold beefy gravy and fresh cheese curds. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Genuine Pizza

19565 Biscayne Blvd. #956, 786-472-9170

Local celebrity chef Michael Schwartz continues to grow his culinary empire with an Aventura location of his new Genuine Pizza concept, inside Aventura Mall. At first glance, the pizzeria's menu may look familiar — especially to fans of Harry's Pizzeria down south. Genuine Pizza is Harry's 2.0; all of the latter's locations are being rebranded into GP. While the restaurant's design has changed, the food hasn't. Guests can still enjoy favorites like the rock shrimp pizza, polenta fries, and warm chocolate chunk cookies. \$\$ (MFP)

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. \$\$ (PRB)

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar

18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 7, 86-787-9030

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." \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Poke + Go

2451 NE 186th St., 305-705-3784

It seemed like only yesterday that South Florida suffered from a lack of decent poke restaurants. In just one year, though, the diced raw-fish specialty has popped up everywhere — including here. Poke + Go's fast-casual vibe is perfect for scarfing down the flavorful Hawaiian seafood bowl, which can feed at least two people in. Mix and match to your tastes or opt for a combo like the Siammin' Salmon, which features the namesake fish and adds Asian slaw and white garlic sauce for good measure. Either way, you'll leave full. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Pubbelly Sushi Market

Aventura Mall

19501 Biscayne Blvd. #069, 786-522-7889

The Pubbelly empire is trying its hand at a more casual concept: Pubbelly Sushi Market. This new Aventura Mall tenant takes the restaurant group's popular sushi gastropub and scales it down into a "grab-and-go" eatery. Menu staples like the butter krab roll and tuna pizza make an appearance, but there are also poke bowls and other light fare better suited for a lunch crowd. Prefer to dine in? Seating is limited, so an off-hour visit boosts your chances of finding a spot. You can also have your meal delivered. \$\$\$ (MFP)

ROK:BRGR

800 Silks Run Rd. (Village at Gulfstream Park), 954-367-3970

Though northern Miami-Dade County has become something of a "better burger" capital, this third location of ROK:BRGR "burger gastropub" chain, just north of the Broward County border, offers attractive upgrades, including nightclub/bar ambiance instead of a fast-casual feel, and food with more dramatic devotion to artisan and/or local ingredients (deviled local eggs; sourced Duroc pork belly) as well as cheffie taste trends: candied bacon, a bacon jam-topped burger, chicken 'n' waffles with bacon/bourbon syrup). More than 40 craft beers, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Serafina

19565 Biscayne Blvd., #1944, 786-920-0989

New York's Serafina is now open at Aventura Mall, and this location is a pizza lover's dream. Pies are a big part of the menu, which also includes a bevy of Italian classics and more creative fare. Skip the basic margherita and get the tartufo nero with black truffles — your sense of adventure will pay off with this pizza that's the very definition of richness. Also, save room for the panna cotta, whose simple description hides some mind-blowing flavor. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (MFP)

Shake Shack

19565 Biscayne Blvd., Space FH5, 786-204-3807

New York favorite Shake Shack has brought its burgers and shakes to Aventura Mall's food hall. The company's third South Florida location provides guests with the staples they've come to know and love. Among them: the ShackBurger with its house "ShackSauce" as well as the Shack-cago Dog, the brand's take on a Chicago hot dog. Frozen custard flavors range from decadent to downright diet-destroying: the Shack Attack's mix of chocolate, more chocolate, and even more chocolate is worth the visit to the gym. \$\$\$ (MFP)

Sr. Ceviche

2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 786-440-7851

While northern Miami-Dade County has other Peruvian places, none serve award-winning ceviches like those of chef/co-owner Alonso Jordan, who took top honors at the first International Day of Ceviche festival. Varieties range from traditionally based (albeit with distinctive personal tweaks) flash-marinated raw fish preparations to contemporary creations like Lima-style fried ceviche, crisp-coated like jaleba but sauced/garnished in ceviche's more complex style; sampler platters feature several choices, and serve a small army. Also a standout on the full Peruvian menu: pescado a la macho, precision-fried whole fish showered in an unusually luxurious assortment of seafood. \$\$\$-\$\$\$ (PRB)

Sushi Sam

19575 Biscayne Blvd., 305-932-8955

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Whole Foods Market

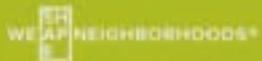
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(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

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