

BISCAYNE

April 2013

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Volume 11 Issue 2

NEW THIS ISSUE
Our New Correspondent p. 58
A Record 325 Restaurants p. 83

imes

Farewell, My Lovely Miami Herald

Glorious past, gloomy present, fretful future
pg 26



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by Bonnie & Ilene



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 <p>PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT <i>the musical</i> APRIL 2-7</p>		<p>2 Priscilla Queen of the Desert 8 PM  Diana Krall 8 PM  "Diana Krall brings sexy back in time!" NPR Music</p>	<p>3 Priscilla Queen of the Desert 8 PM  "Funny and fabulous! Joyous entertainment with eye-popping visuals and unexpected heart!" The Hollywood Reporter</p>	<p>4 Priscilla Queen of the Desert 8 PM  "Joyous, crowd-pleasing entertainment!" The Hollywood Reporter</p>	<p>5 Priscilla Queen of the Desert 8 PM  "Rollicking crowd-pleaser in sequins! Priscilla packs enough heart to leave audiences enthralled!" Variety</p>	<p>6 FREE Tour 12 PM  Priscilla Queen of the Desert 2 & 8 PM  Savion Glover 8 PM  "The greatest tap dancer who ever lived!" Gregory Hines</p>
<p>7 Priscilla Queen of the Desert 2 & 7:30 PM  "A feel-good show with a big, joyous heart. Priscilla ramps up the thrills!" New York Post</p>	 <p>SAVION GLOVER <i>Sub Sanctuary</i></p>	 <p>GENERATION NEXT PIANO APRIL 12</p>		<p>11 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  "With seemingly endless side-splitting moments, it may well be the funniest play of the season." The Boston Metro</p>	<p>12 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Generation Next: Piano 8 PM </p>	<p>13 FREE Tour 12 PM  The Savannah Disputation 3 & 7:30 PM  Two daffy Catholic sisters find themselves in a verbal smack down with a door-to-door evangelist in their own home. Don't Miss It!</p>
<p>14 The Savannah Disputation 4 PM  Savannah Disputation is crackling with wit and brimming with emotion!</p>	<p>Saturday, April 6</p>	<p>16 Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth 8 PM  "Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth is a knockout!" The Los Angeles Times</p>	<p>17 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Come and enjoy this heaven-sent comedy drenched in southern charm!</p>	<p>18 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  The Savannah Disputation is a heaven-sent comedy infused with a pinch of hellfire and a dollop of damnation. Don't miss it!</p>	<p>19 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Esperanza Spalding 8:30 PM  "Ms. Spalding is something else: a charismatic whirlwind proudly hailed as some kind of vital infusion for jazz." - The New York Times</p>	<p>20 FREE Tour 12 PM  Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 7 PM  The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  The Miami Symphony Orchestra: Symphonic Blues 8 PM </p>
<p>21 Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 2 PM  The Savannah Disputation 4 PM  Free Gospel Sundays: Donald Lawrence 4 PM </p>	 <p>ESPERANZA SPALDING RADIO MUSIC SOCIETY April 19</p>	<p>23 Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 8 PM  Violetta was one of the most desirable women in Paris but was labeled by society as "la traviata," a woman who has gone astray.</p>	<p>24 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 8 PM  Don't miss this tragically passionate tale of love.</p>	<p>25 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  What unfolds is an up-to-the-minute comedy about organized religion, faith and morals in the not-so-United States.</p>	<p>26 The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 8 PM </p>	<p>27 FREE Tour 12 PM  The Savannah Disputation 7:30 PM  Florida Grand Opera: La traviata 8 PM </p>
<p>28 The Savannah Disputation 4 PM  Drenched in Southern charm!</p>		 <p>APRIL 11-28 THE SAVANNAH DISPUTATION</p>		 <p>FLORIDA GRAND opera LA TRAVIATA APRIL 20 - 27</p>		

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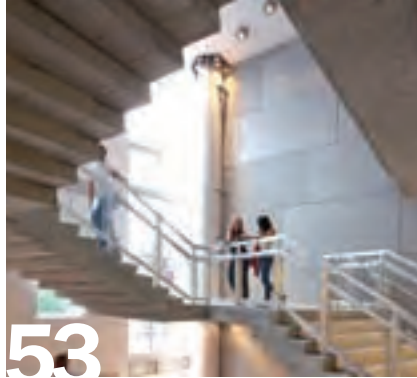
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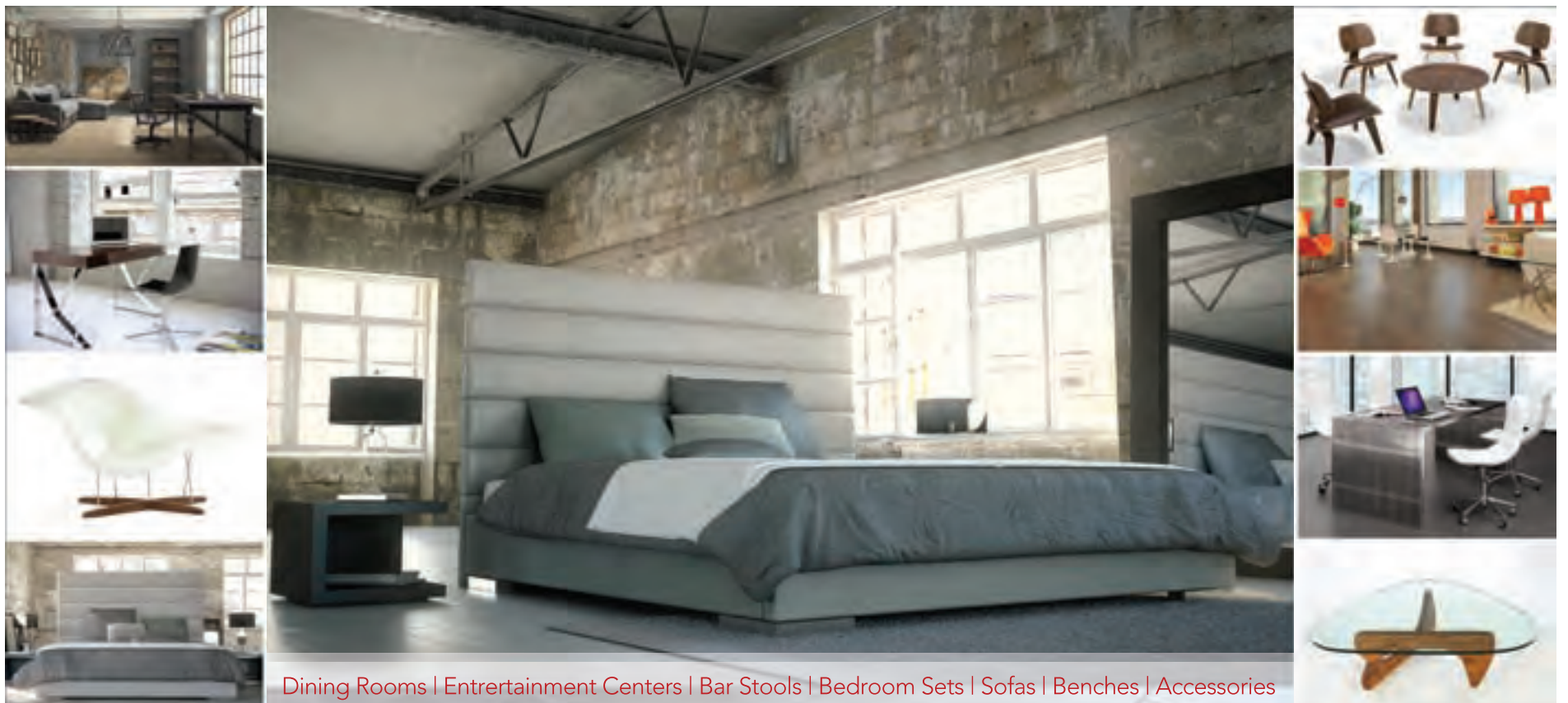
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Commentary: LETTERS

A Rational Christian on Christianity?

An openly antitheist screed in a community newspaper?!? The End Times must be nigh (“Rethinking Religion” by Christian Cipriani, March 2013).

Or is this a sign of the dawning of the long overdue Rational Spring in the superpower of god-bothering, 95 percent of whose population believe their god created the universe; 40 percent of whose population believe he did so in the last 10,000 years?

Hope springs eternal.

Oh, and before I forget, and what is it U.S. politicians must close with when running for office? God Bless America©.

*Shruti Chatterji
Aventura*

More People Like Christian on Christianity

Outstanding! Kudos to Christian Cipriani for such a sober, right-on, superb, “hit the nail on the head” article.

We need more people writing and being published with actual common sense like him.

*Ernie Garcia
Miami*

A Bigoted Christian on Christianity

Christian Cipriani’s “Rethinking Religion” is nothing more than a rambling anti-religion screed. Please explain what “skepticism of Darwinian evolution taught in a handful of American public schools” has to do with Pope Benedict’s resignation.

Can Cipriani please identify the religions that he claims are engaged in battle? If he is using the term “battle” in a figurative sense, such as a battle of ideas, then it is a tremendously good thing that people with different religious beliefs are discussing their differences.

Or does he think that freedom of speech and thought should be limited to liberal atheists?

I am not a scientist, so I’m not going to pretend to know how “we’re irreversibly screwing up the environment.” However, if you believe that the environment is irreversibly screwed up, it doesn’t seem like there is much point to changing things now. Maybe that is why the people who talk so much about environmental issues live no differently from those who think global warming is a hoax.

Cipriani’s assertion that faith is anathema to reason is wrong. He probably doesn’t understand faith, and based on his commentary, he certainly doesn’t use reason.

His view of history has little connection to reality, and his assertion is fantasy

that “across the world, there’s an almost perfectly inverse relationship between the importance of religion and general prosperity.” I suggest he look at all the countries, such as China, North Korea, etc., that have had officially atheist governments, and their general prosperity.

Over the past 100-plus years, the greatest “threat to peace, happiness, and human progress” has been from atheism, not religion. The greatest mass murderers of all time have all been atheist. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, just to mention a few, all shared Cipriani’s views of religion.

Lumping all religions together and ascribing all the problems of the world to religion is not a reasoned reflection. It is bigotry.

*Jerome Hurtak, Esq.
North Miami*

Out of Commission: Spence-Jones Is No Friend to District 5

With respect to your cover story “Now Showing: Magic City Madhouse” (March 2013) and Miami City Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, I can’t argue if it’s true or not that just about everyone in Miami conspired to get Spence-Jones out of office. But I can argue that if they had succeeded, the people in District 5 would have been better off.

No one knows whether her accusations are true, but we can analyze her behavior in office based on her own words. There are two accusations she made that should have disqualified her, or at least made her constituents repulsed by her candidacy.

She asserts that funds designed to help small businesses in impoverished areas wound up in her bank account. Why? Because of her “business background,” she deserved the money more than existing businesses in the district. Businesses struggling to survive looked to their government for help. Unfortunately, the very people they thought were helping them were, in reality, competing against them.

If you need any further evidence that this was a horrible decision, see which businesses are still surviving. Was it the Café Soul that got the \$50,000 or her constituents, Timbuktu Market Place and Osun Village? If you think Spence-Jones deserved it because of her “superior business experience,” then try having dinner at Café Soul. Unfortunately it disappeared faster than the \$50,000.

Spence-Jones also claims that she was being kept off the city commission because she would have voted to keep

.....
Continued on page 14



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Commentary: LETTERS

Letters

Continued from page 12

former Miami Police Chief Miguel Exposito on the job. Chief Exposito was the worst police chief in the history of the City of Miami. Under his watch, eight unarmed constituents of Spence-Jones were shot and killed. Just think if eight unarmed citizens of the City of Miami Beach or Coral Gables were shot and killed. Do you think their political representatives would have been fighting to keep the police chief on the job?

Unfortunately for the citizens of District 5, with friends like Spence-Jones, they don't need enemies!

Alfred Mcknight
El Portal

A Decade of Procrastination Finally Ends

The column by *Biscayne Times* publisher Jim Mullin got me thinking ("After Ten Years, It's Clear That Reports on the Death Of Print Are Greatly Exaggerated," March 2013).

Let's go back ten years, when this paper landed on my driveway and I said, "Why do they deliver these rag newspapers?" (That is when it was quite common to get many on your driveway every month.) With my high level of curiosity, I looked and I read it thoroughly, and to my surprise, I really enjoyed it.

Now, ten years later, I am looking forward to my next copy, still reading the entire thing, and for those many years I have been visiting and spending money with the *BT*'s advertisers, passing on the word to others if we had a good experience.

Since the "age of the big boxes," my husband and I have chosen to spend our money at local "mom and pop" businesses, and your paper provides us with many to choose from.

Your paper is also a source of lots of local news, and the monthly "Biscayne Crime Beat" is a real hoot! It can't believe how stupid people are when I read it, but I work with the public, so I realize this.

It has taken me ten years to write this, as I have enjoyed your paper from the very beginning and I have been meaning to contact you regarding this.

Keep up the terrific work!

Pattie Solomon
Sans Souci

Does Stephen Ross Think We're All Suckers?

I am writing in response to Frank Rolason's article "Pigskin Politics" (March

2013), about the Dolphins' request for \$200 million, and the question for readers: "What project would you propose for the sum of \$200 million of public money?"

First, there is the greater question. Should we be taxing anyone to give money to a private citizen who will not invest his own money in his own business because he does not believe it is a good investment? This evaluation is by the Dolphins' own management.

Miami-Dade County relies heavily of tourism and conventions to create jobs, but taxes on visitors have consequences. New York City learned the hard way after its increase in resort taxes on hotels drove trade shows and conventions to other cities.

Further, studies done by American hotel associations on the benefits of sports facilities to hotel occupancy indicate that there basically is no significant increase on days when sport events are held.

On the question of how to spend \$200 million that might best serve the community, I offer this:

First, because the convention/trade show business is a large part of local industry, we should first invest in building a larger convention center. This would enable Miami to attract the large trade shows and conventions that would love to come to Miami but avoid the city because we don't have a facility to house these events. I know this to be true because I have attended these large shows and have asked the sponsors.

Next, we should give a portion of the increased resort tax to Jackson Hospital. This would help cover costs for all the nonpaying tourists and visitors who use Jackson. Aren't there undocumented immigrant visitors, too?

Then we should set aside an amount to pay for the extra police needed to manage the increase in population that tourism causes. Also we should set aside monies to pay for the extra lifeguards needed to make our beaches safe for these same tourists. Currently local resident taxpayers are supporting the added costs to fund the infrastructure needed to support the tourists. Hello!

Keep in mind the Dolphins stated that one reason they want to improve their stadium is so they can increase the price of tickets to their loyal fans. That's another Hello, Suckers!

So let's fleece the tourists so we can fleece our customers. Sounds like Miami circa 1950s.

Ralph Camerlengo
Miami Shores

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Taxi to the Bright Side

A cab ride through Chicago suggests Miami has a long way to go, and a lot to learn

By Gaspar González
BT Contributor

On a recent trip to Chicago, I found myself riding with a particularly chatty cabbie, one who delighted in trumpeting the Windy City's offerings. Rather than talk to me about the Bulls or Da Bears, where to get the best deep-dish pizza, or even where I might hear some Chicago blues, though, he stuck to more prosaic subjects.

"Chicago has the best public transportation of any city in the world," he said, as we drove across town. Aside from the city's elevated train system (the famed "El"), he noted, "there are multiple bus lines running in each direction. If you miss your bus, all you have to do is walk two blocks and catch another one."

My cabbie also talked schools. Conceding those in Chicago proper were going through tough times — more than 50 are slated to close owing to a budget crisis — he nevertheless raved about the schools in neighboring 'burbs like Naperville and Hinsdale. "Some of the best you'll find," he told me, before depositing me at my destination.

The encounter made me laugh, not because it's unusual to meet a cabbie with an outsize attachment to his hometown, but because I imagined what a similar conversation might sound like in a Miami taxi: "Miami? Oh, man, we've

got the best beaches anywhere. And the hottest parties." Beyond that, it would be a fairly quiet ride. (Unless the subject of, say, strip clubs came up.)

Why is that? Well, it might be because, unlike Miami, Chicago has things like efficient public transportation and a vibrant parks system — the city recently committed to rebuilding 300 playgrounds — and these inspire a certain civic pride. In Miami we also have civic pride, of course, but it's largely limited to the weather, for which we take an inordinate amount of credit. *Eighty-degree days in December? Can't get those up north.*

Many will proclaim, somewhat defensively, that you can't compare Miami to Chicago. Chicago was founded in the 19th Century; Miami didn't become a real city until the middle of the 20th Century. Hey, we're *still* in the process of becoming a real city.

Some of that is fair (historically undeniable, even), but consider that a number of Chicago's impressive achievements have come in the past 15 to 20 years, among them the transformation of a section of downtown's Grant Park from a moribund train yard into one of America's great public spaces, Millennium Park.

Fifteen years ago, Miami also had a moribund train yard located close to its downtown. Instead of building a park, we built a mall and called it Midtown Miami. It's nice, it's convenient, but it's still a mall.



So, yes, Miami is young, but like parents always tell their kids, you can only use that as an excuse for so long; at some point, you have to start taking responsibility for the choices you make.

For those who don't think Chicago is a good comparison because it's too historic and too big a city — though, ironically, some people here never tire of talking about Miami as if it were Manhattan South — take a decidedly smaller urban center: Pittsburgh. (The population of Pittsburgh is 307,000 to Miami's 408,000; Pittsburgh's home county, Allegheny, has 1.2 million residents to Miami-Dade's 2.6 million.)

Pittsburgh, one could argue, didn't have the *advantage* of being a new city. Thirty years ago, it was just the opposite: a crumbling one, dependent on an industry, steel, in precipitous decline.

Today Pittsburgh is widely considered one of America's most livable cities — by some estimates, its *most* livable — thanks to a boom in its science and technology economy, anchored by the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie-Mellon University.

Pittsburgh reinvented itself, and not in the past 50 or 60 years, but in just the past few decades. I've been there;

Pittsburgh has great museums (including the Andy Warhol), terrific food, and a thriving nightlife scene.

I'll also add it managed to build what may be the prettiest Major League ballpark in America, PNC Park, in 2001. And it did so for \$216 million, approximately \$284 million in today's dollars, or about half what Marlins Park cost.

But that's Miami for you. We like to do things in a big way, often to our detriment. Why have a centrally located park when you can build a whole "Midtown"? Why not spend half-a-billion bucks for a baseball stadium? (And while we're at it, some might say, why not build a \$200 million art museum, and worry about the art later?)

Miami could learn a lot from big cities like Chicago and smaller ones like Pittsburgh — namely, how to prioritize and invest in those things that actually translate to a higher quality of life: education, urban infrastructure, public transportation, and green spaces. Or we can keep trying to impress everybody by building "world-class" (our favorite adjective) this and that.

It's the former that would give our cab drivers something to talk about.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Strange Things Happen in Places Faraway

There's a reason the state capital is in Tallahassee

By Jack King
BT Contributor

It's that time of year when you might want to hold on to your wallet a little tighter. The Florida legislature is in session.

In spite of being run by conservative Republicans for the past few years, it always costs us money when they meet. Plus we always get the usual crazies acting out. They think we'll never find out about it because Tallahassee is so far away.

How far away? Well, one-third of Florida's population is more than an eight-hour drive from the capital and another third are more than four hours away — and that's a problem. Studies have shown that the farther away a state capital is from population centers, the more apt the legislature and civil servants are to misbehave. They do that well and often in Tallahassee.

So how in the hell did we get Tallahassee as our capital? It began more than 150 years ago, when the two major towns in Florida were Pensacola and St. Augustine. Tallahassee was right in the middle. It was the unofficial capital of the Cotton Belt and a center for the slave trade.

In 1845 you could go there with a sack of money and buy all the slaves you wanted. Now you can go to Tallahassee with a sack of money and buy all the legislators you want. Some things just never change.

A lot has happened in Tallahassee since 1845, but that's a story for another column — or a ten-volume history of Florida — so let's fast forward to 2012. Enter Gov. Rick Scott. He arrived on the scene after his health-management company paid a \$1.6 billion fine for ripping off the federal government via Medicare fraud. Not to worry. He had enough money stashed away to spend \$70 million getting himself elected governor.

His tenure has been marked by bluster comments that scared even Republican stalwarts. Over time, he's had to walk back nearly every one of them, prompting some to wonder if he was a graduate of Ringling's Sarasota clown college.

Now, in response to many polls showing he has no chance of being re-elected, he's shifted gears again. His most significant shift was first rejecting ObamaCare for Florida then reversing course and accepting the program. If you think Scott can't get any worse, think again.

In a move that many thought was brilliant, he selected Jennifer Carroll as his lieutenant governor. She was young, former military, a legislator, female, and black. What could go wrong? Apparently lots.

Integrity Florida, a watchdog group, inspected her financial disclosure statements and found that her net worth was all over the map: \$271,000 in 2004; \$23 million in 2005; a staggering \$202 million in 2006; then a freefall to \$520,000



in 2007. No significant changes in assets and liabilities, and no explanation.

The craziness triggered closer examination, which revealed that she was involved with a nonprofit group called Allied Veterans of the World. Doesn't sound bad, until you consider that it's been a front for a string of Internet cafés (online gambling) that was funneling hundreds of millions of dollars to Allied, avoiding taxes and making it difficult for investigators to track the money, much of which was showered on Florida politicians and political parties. The nonprofit was actually spending less than two percent of its income on charitable causes.

Dozens of people have been arrested, nearly 50 strip-mall Internet cafés have been shuttered, Jennifer Carroll has resigned, and our pious legislators have been scrambling to return dirty money and outlaw the business. Thanks, governor. You're doing a heck of a job, Scotty.

But Scott has done much more to make sure Florida remains a Third World state, especially when it comes to natural resources, available for plunder to whomever has the biggest sack of money. Regarding Big Sugar, the Eye on Miami

blog's Gimleteye said it best: "...The House is planning to undo years of federal litigation and negotiation that resulted in efforts to hold the Great Destroyers [Big Sugar] accountable. It's a sad testimony to the power of the radical right that cast its spell, holding the state in a fog of amnesia.

"...Tallahassee is a bubble. It operates as an enclosed political sphere with its own oxygen — money — and its own laws. Government has never been more divorced from the people. The result is a state being turned into a 'sacrifice zone' for the radical right. Protecting the rights of polluters is a key agenda of the GOP. That is not, however, how it is pitched to citizens, voters, or to the media.

"These are 'reasonable' businessmen. These are 'job creators.' These are 'men of faith.' These qualities are etched in the marketing that pitched Rick Scott to the governor's mansion and a host of telegenic young Republicans whose main aspiration is to...materialize on Fox News like Sen. Marco Rubio."

Orlando doesn't look so bad as the capital of Florida.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Not Brand New

People and companies love to put their names on things — and always have

By **Christian Cipriani**
BT Contributor

I was driving around in late February, doing last-minute errands before my wedding. On the radio was a story about a private prison company that spent \$12 million for naming rights to the Florida Atlantic University football stadium.

No longer content to live in the shadows, the Geo Group is stepping out. But why would a company with no need to market to consumers bother shelling out money to have its name on the side of a stadium? If supporting the team was what mattered, they could have simply donated money.

Only brands that grow market share from being top-of-mind should bother with naming rights. And even then, it brings a dubious return on investment. This kind of vanity branding is usually reserved for Fortune 500s synonymous with a particular city (as demonstrated by Pittsburgh's Heinz Field, for example).

But a wholly unknown entity like Geo Group plunking down money to sponsor a university stadium — albeit a small, regional one — is an ego investment. Having their brand in patrons' faces doesn't benefit their bottom line, and no one gets a warm, fuzzy feeling about prison because they had an enjoyable afternoon watching football.

In another local story buzzing the press, developer Jorge Perez, CEO of the Related Group, recently donated

a hefty package of art and cash to the newest, still-under-construction Miami Art Museum, in exchange for having it named the Perez Art Museum Miami. And I'm sure he could care less about the criticism. It will pass in a year or two, and his name will be on a landmark for the next century.

Philanthropy is a way to transform wealth into immortality. Andrew Carnegie didn't leave his name on the side of a shopping center. He left it on universities, concert halls, and museums. Long after great men and women die, they trust their names to live on in association with high culture and the public good. (Hats off to Adrienne Arsht, who turned the downtown arts center that bears her name into a true tongue twister.)

So we have philanthropists who buy a cultural legacy for generations, and we have corporations that play the short game, hyper-marketing their brands to the masses. Both of these annoy a thoughtful public for different reasons, but the latter is getting out of control.

Do you know where the Dolphins play? Most people say Dolphin Stadium, or, if they can remember that far back, Joe Robbie Stadium. But it's now actually on name number seven: Sun Life Stadium. This makes Marlins owner and sports pariah Jeffrey Loria *almost* look good, since at least his stadium is called Marlins Park (for now).

I'd like to see evidence that these eight-figure deals actually translate into



BT photo by Christian Cipriani

Luca Pitti wanted a palace to outdo his friend Cosimo de'Medici. He got it.

sales for the sponsoring company. Are you booking more flights on American Airlines because the Heat are winning? Did you open a bank account at BB&T after the Bon Jovi concert?

I was lucky enough to spend the first two weeks of March on honeymoon in France and Italy, and I was blown away by ancient egos. People truly never change. Everywhere one sees insane effort and detail rendered for God and country, generations living and dying around one unending project.

On the south side of the Arno River sits Palazzo Pitti, built by a banker who essentially ran Florence. Supposedly, he wanted a house so big the Medici Palace could fit in his garden. He got it. Upstairs is a room wrought with gilded woodwork that took 200 years to complete.

As the Greek saying goes, "Society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." Luca Pitti and his ilk weren't striving for a future good. I enjoy looking at their treasures with awareness that they were, at best, acts of unbridled ego and, at worst, absurd presents to God, built by slaves for the pleasure of religious hypocrites.

Elsewhere we saw the Roman Pantheon ("temple to all gods"), which has the name of the ancient commissioner, statesman, and general Marcus Agrippa inscribed on a frieze, and the Colosseum, which was known as Amphitheatrum Flavium, culled from the family name "Flavius" of Vespasian and Titus, who oversaw the beginning and end of its construction.

In Paris, we saw the Louvre, a name which may refer to its size; and Versailles, an old French place-name that refers to working the earth. Most attractions we visited were named for leaders and locations.

It's notable that Versailles wasn't named for the egomaniac that built it. If it were built today, it would be called the Red Bull Louis XIV Absolute Monarch Sun King Ultra Palace, featuring the LVMH Hall of Mirrors VIP Lounge.

What will our current institutions be called in 500 years? Nothing, probably. We no longer create structures to last as long as Roman temples. Today's entrepreneur-kings and four-year emperors will have to be content with not-so-permanent immortality.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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BizBuzz

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

By Pamela Robin Brandt
BT Contributor

Since “BizBuzz” is a column about newsy things happening at advertisers’ businesses, we always try to start with an introduction that’s timely — often something pegged to a holiday. This year, though, April seems mighty short of holidays, according to the calendar on our desk.

There’s April Fool’s Day, of course. But the trick to April 1 pranks is to make them believable. And we can’t start by saying, “This month advertisers have no great deals to offer you, no fun events happening, nothing at all you’d be interested in, so don’t even bother reading this column.”

Please. Readers would know that’s a crock (suitable only for April 4, Tell a Lie Day) before we even yelled, “April Fool!”

As usual, our advertisers have a ton of great stuff to offer this month. Read on.

Are you reading? Good. Because if not, you’d miss David Laurenzo’s special deal for “BizBuzz” readers at **Laurenzo’s Italian Market** (16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381): Pizaolo Don Vito will craft you a 16-inch authentic Neapolitan thin-crust pizza, regularly \$14.99, for just \$9.99. David also invites readers to two Italian holiday-related April celebrations that make it clear we need a better desk calendar. For centuries, he says, Venice’s Feast Day of San

Marco, on April 25, has been highlighted by a feast with up to 80 courses at the Palazzo Ducale on St. Mark’s Square.

Laurenzo’s will serve the signature dish risi bisi (risotto with spring peas and prosciutto), regularly \$12, for \$6.99. And on April 14 celebrate Sagra del Gnocco with the 6000 Veneto locals who flock to the town of Teola to dine on gnocchi made from roughly 1400 pounds of potatoes. At Laurenzo’s *caffè*, small or large bowls of homemade gnocchi, normally \$5.99 and \$10.99, will go for \$2.99 and \$5.99.

Actually, Italians indulge in a lot of April food-focused festivities, including one that features stockfish hurling contests (think discus throwing, but with a three-foot-long dried fish). If you feel inspired to throw a mini festival of your own this month, two new advertisers can provide a much better theme. To keep the Italian thing going, contact **Piccolo Pizza** (2104 NE 123rd St., 305-893-9550). Compared to Hubert Benmoussa’s famous pies, his catering items are something of a “best kept secret,” but there’s a full range of elegant yet nicely priced dishes: French bread finger sandwiches (like Capreses featuring fresh mozzarella), quiches (classic Lorraine or spinach), designer salad platters, seasonal fruit trays, mini pizza bites, and more.

Or turn your festival — even a business meeting — into a fiesta with catering from returning advertiser **Lime Fresh Mexican Grill** (three locations in



BT territory: 3201 N. Miami Ave. #100, 305-576-5463; 14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800; 7 W. Flagler St., 305-789-0252). You’ll get the same tacos, burritos, and quesadillas as at this fast-casual chain’s restaurants, packaged in easy-to-transport setups that double as party serving trays. Possibilities range from individual box lunches through large platters to an interactive Grab-n-Go taco bar. Sides, too.

Speaking of stuff that was news to us: Check out the impressive food menu at new advertiser **Blue Martini** (900 S. Miami Ave. #250, Mary Brickell Village, 305-981-2583). With more than 40 martinis on the lounge’s drinks menu, we expected a few snacks to soak up the gin. But major dishes like marinated beef tenderloin medallions with fingerling potatoes and tomato salad were a surprise, as was a late-night menu that’s served till closing — which, on weekends, is practically breakfast time.

Yes, breakfast is not just martinis anymore, even, evidently, when they include fruit. So you’ll want to check out this issue’s ad in the Dining Guide for **Bagels & Company** (11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435), which describes all the weekday eat-in breakfast specials David Cohen is offering this month — a different combo every day, with only

one similarity: very lavish generosity for the price.

The Sunday gospel brunches at returning advertiser **City Hall the Restaurant** (2004 Biscayne Blvd., 305-7643130), with Maryell Epps, are local legend. But here’s something you might not know: Restaurateur Steve Haas has just instituted a daily happy hour (5:00-7:00 p.m.) with 2-4-1 wine, beer, and well drinks; a vodka special; and a most affordable (\$6-\$9) bar menu of imaginative plates.

Somehow in our previous descriptions of **B Sweet** (20 NE 41st St., 305-918-4453), before this new breakfast/lunch café became a new advertiser, we enthused about 30-year veteran pastry chef Tom Worhach’s desserts, fresh salads, and sandwiches on homemade French breads — but forgot all about his homemade soups. These change daily, so you never know what you’ll find — except on Fridays, when, by popular demand, it’s always shrimp and corn chowder. Go early to score a bowl (only \$4.50).

Despite an unlikely location on the edge of Wynwood, **Jean Paul’s House** (2426 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-7373), a charmingly renovated old Miami bungalow, has become a favorite romantic dinner/cozy business lunch destination

Continued on page 24

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BizBuzz

Continued from page 22

for local foodies in the know. They also know that the creative ceviches and tiraditos of contemporary American/ Peruvian chef Jean Paul Desmaison are must-haves.

For dining deals, sign up with new advertiser **PrimeCard** (800-444-8872, www.primecard.com/join). The card grants discounts of up to 50% at thousands of restaurants, retailers, and travel destinations — no hassles, no expiration dates.

Here's something you might find yourself celebrating if you're among the best and brightest real estate agents. It's called a fabulous new job. **Dennis Esposito at Century 21 King Realty** is marking 50 years in business by continuing to hire new agents to help the company keep up with the tail end of the buyers' market. Call him (305-751-6161) for an interview, and wish him a happy anniversary.

If you're beside yourself trying to get compensated for property damage to your home, the "Insurance Justice Lawyer" **Scott R. Dinin** (595 NE 69th St., 855-346-4652) wants you to know that he and his team are now accepting property-damage and condo water-damage cases from clients all over Florida. Owing to the complicated and time-consuming nature of such claims, too many people don't pursue their right to full compensation, Scott says. He'll deal with insurance companies aggressively, and won't charge till you win.

For elderly people no longer able to live without assistance, simply staying in their own homes can be problematic. But **Visiting Angels** (305-505-2294, www.VisitingAngels.com/MiamiFL) provides a full range of temporary or long-term non-medical home care solutions, from housekeeping to hygiene/dressing assistance. Call anytime through April 30 for a complimentary Home Safety and Fall Prevention assessment.

Whether you're currently looking to buy or sell your home, **Robbie Bell** (305-528-8557, www.GoToRobbieBell.info), an EWM broker associate specializing in urban lifestyles and relocation, has developed an ingenious solution. For buyers, she's offering complimentary 90-minute tours of neighborhoods from Miami Shores to Wynwood. Want to sell? Give her a call so she can include your property on her drive-by itinerary.

For nonprofessionals, interest in real estate typically has to do with buying/

renting or selling our own homes. But others who live in our young city are excited by the bigger picture — actually taking part in developing it for maximum livability. If you want to be a leader, innovator, and entrepreneur in real estate development, the **University of Miami School of Architecture** has a one-year Masters in Real Estate + Urbanism graduate program that combines the fundamentals of real estate development with livable-community planning and design. Go to www.mredu.arc.miami.edu/about.html for information.

Readers who live or work in El Portal will want to check out this issue's ad for a week-long **El Portal Community Design Charette**, open to all residents, property owners, or business owners — including those with no formal training in urban planning. It's enough just to have an interest in the village's current issues, and desire to share your vision for the future. The design workshops run May 4-10. Contact village manager Jason Walker (jwalker@villageofelportal.org, 305-795-7880) for more info.

For those whose interest in real estate stops at roughly the boundaries of your own lawn, **Bob's Lawnmower** (15270 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-947-3578) has some special deals this month to keep the grass in check, with minimum effort on your part. Kawasaki power products receive \$25 cash-back rebates. And there's also a rebate (ending April 30) on Snapper riding mowers.

Those looking for a somewhat larger ride should hurry over to the new location of **Adrenaline Motorbikes** (830 NE 79th St., 786-317-4192), famed for cycle/scooter service and repairs. Adrenaline's expanded showroom has enabled a great selection of pre-owned bikes in top condition, including, at press time, a 2005 Kawasaki 650RR with only 2600 miles for \$2800. Run, don't walk, if you want to ride it home.

At the moment our home's tile floors kinda look like we were driving our motor scooter indoors; simple vinegar keeps the tiles pretty, but the grout is another story. Fortunately **The Grout Doctor** (18191 NW 68th Ave. #112; 786-522-5433) is celebrating his seventh anniversary of curing sick grout in our area, with a special discount if you mention "BizBuzz."

With summer heat approaching fast, you'll want to ensure your pool is in shape, too. So take advantage of

spring savings on all pool maintenance equipment and products, from cleaners to floats/toys, at **Pinch A Penny** (9071 Biscayne Blvd., 786-518-3193). A store-wide sale of 15% off on everything runs April 18-21.

In this month's "Why Didn't I Go to School Here?" department: **Allison Academy** (1881 NE 164th St., 305-940-3922), a grade 6-12 private school whose students have foreign travel opportunities every spring, reports that kids are currently on an educational tour of Barcelona, the south of France, Pisa, Florence, and Rome. To entertain those of us stuck at home, Allison will present its annual open-to-the-public talent show at North Miami Beach's City Hall on April 11. For further info: www.allisonacademy.com.

Assuming that April in Pisa is not a possibility, **HistoryMiami**, formerly the Historical Museum of Southern Florida (101 W. Flagler St., 305-375-1492) offers fascinating educational time trips through Miami's past, both off-site in historical neighborhoods and on-site in the museum's galleries. Play Historical Trivia at "Wine Down Wednesdays," Miami's only cultural happy hour. Explore old Miami's Seminole culture, aviation history, mobsters, fashion trends, much more. Visit www.historymiami.org for further info.

Meanwhile another advertiser, the **Museum of Contemporary Art** (770 NE 125th St.) is focusing, this month, on the future — yours. Go to the museum's website, www.mocamiami.org, to learn about MOCA's *free* creative career programs for teens. MOCA also has programs for adults and families.

To explore today's fashion possibilities, visit just-relocated, bigger, and better **R. M. Fabrics Boutique** (901 NE 79th St., 305-687-0966) on April 18, from 7:00-10:00 p.m. for a Fashion Designer Night Out. Highlighted by a live fashion show at 8:00 p.m., the evening will also feature a special guest designer and light refreshments from local vendors.

This month **Monsignor Edward Pace High School** (15600 NW 32nd Ave.) offers two separate events, for kids and for adults. On May 11, from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Spartan Boot Camp #2 provides 5th graders to 7th graders an intensive day exploring broadcasting, creative writing, and science experimentation. Sign up at: bit.ly/spartan-bootcamp2. And on April 26, the school will host its annual Spartan Golf Classic

(including unlimited driving range use, lunch, and a multi-contest tournament) at the Country Club of Miami, to benefit the Spartans-for-Spartans scholarship program. For sponsorship info or registration, call Elvita Reigosa (305-624-8534, ext. 212).

There's always all-ages fun at **LoudGirl Exchange** (6621 Biscayne Blvd., 305-458-5783), "where families go to trade clothes, art, and ideas," but the shop especially invites you and the kids to two upcoming events. On April 14, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., they'll be making and flying origami kites. And on April 20, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., look for Loud-Girl's booth at the Green Baby Fair, at the Little Haiti Cultural Center.

Celebrate Pet Owners' Independence Day, April 17, by letting **Rio's Pet Spa** (19030 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-935-5551) take doggie off your hands for the day. Rio's does boarding and play days in its cordial kennel facilities, as well as grooming.

There couldn't be a more appropriate way to recognize National 8-Track Tape Day (April 11) than tuning in to new advertising partner **WDNA-FM (88.9)**. It's now South Florida's premiere jazz station, but when WDNA began broadcasting in 1980, it was from a trailer in Homestead — using 8-track tapes. As a noncommercial public radio station, WDNA does depend on listener support, and its spring membership drive is under way. Go to www.wdna.org to contribute (and score fabulous musical thank-you gifts).

It didn't surprise us to learn that April 15, income tax deadline, is also Rubber Eraser Day; we go through cases of the things trying to fill out our own tax forms. Instead, Michael and Olga Fidlin at **Miami Finance Center** (12573 Biscayne Blvd., 786-329-9950) can faultlessly do it for you — or for just \$25, file an extension to gain you extra time. (And if you're forming a new corporation, they'll handle all paperwork for \$295, all state fees included.)

Finally: April 15 is also when voter registration closes for **North Miami's May 14** election to fill the seats for mayor plus city council representatives in District 2 and District 3. That explains the campaign ads in this issue and the yard signs all over town. We can't tell you who to vote for, but we do urge you to register, if you haven't already, and vote.

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**Farewell,
My Lovely Miami Herald**

**Our once-great daily newspaper is
abandoning its namesake city and heading for
an uncertain future**

By Erik Bojnansky



Courtesy of Knight Foundation

Brothers John and James Knight built their publishing headquarters big enough for growth and strong enough for hurricanes.

Going to the *Miami Herald's* alumni gathering on March 20 was a heartwarming experience for former *El Nuevo Herald* executive editor Barbara Gutierrez.

"It was very much like a high school reunion," says Gutierrez, who worked on and off at the *Miami Herald* and the Spanish-language *El Nuevo Herald* between 1980 and 2001. Pictures of *Herald* employees hung on the walls of the front lobby at 1 Herald Plaza, "many of them, like myself, who weren't there anymore," she says. But most of all, there were lots of enthusiastic embraces from old friends and colleagues who hadn't seen each other for years.

"To us it was our home for many, many years," says Gutierrez, now a media relations officer for the University of Miami. "It wasn't that it was a beautiful building.... To me it had memories.... In every corner of that building there is a memory."

When the event was proposed a few months ago on the *Herald's* Alumni Facebook page, some former employees predicted that three people would attend. The reunion was scheduled for the middle of a weekday. Yet close to 1000 Heraldites showed up, many of whom flew in from other parts of the country, including former executive editors Tom Fiedler and Doug Clifton.

Tim Chapman worked at the *Miami Herald* as a reporter and photographer for 40 years, until he retired this past December. But he wasn't willing to make the

commute for the reunion from his new home in the Keys. To him, 1 Herald Plaza represents what the *Herald* once was: a competitive, award-winning newspaper that served as a watchdog for the public interest.

Now, Chapman says, the paper is a shadow of its former self and he has vowed never to set foot near the building again, except to see it razed. "I hope they have fun," Chapman says of his fellow alumni just prior to the reunion. "The only fun I'll have is when they bulldoze the son of a bitch."

The *Miami Herald* has called 1 Herald Plaza home since 1963. It's where the paper won 19 of its 20 Pulitzer Prizes. It's where activists, developers, and politicians journeyed to sway public opinion. It's where policy was influenced, scandals

were unearthed, memorable features crafted, and history made.

That ends in May. The Genting Group bought 1 Herald Plaza, the nearby Boulevard Shops, and 14 acres of land from the McClatchy Company, the *Herald's* latest owner, for \$236 million in 2011, and the developer's plans for the bayfront don't include retaining the building.

As *Herald* business writer Elaine Walker reported March 14: "By the end of this year, the bayfront site where *The Miami Herald* now stands will be reduced to vacant land ready for redevelopment. The demolition of the *Herald* headquarters is the first step in the Genting Group's plans to turn the site into a luxury hotel with up to 500 rooms and several hundred luxury condos edged by a pedestrian bay walk."

If the Malaysian-based company has its way, the project will also include a casino, just like the five other resort projects the conglomerate has built around the world. Ironically, the *Herald's* editorials once railed against casino gambling. Now it's the state's legislative leaders who seem reluctant to expand gambling in Florida, and Genting's gaming hopes remain in limbo.

The *Miami Herald*, *El Nuevo Herald*, as well as a studio for radio station for WLRN will take up residence in Doral, in a 158,000-square-foot building formerly occupied by the U.S. Army's Southern Command, 12 miles west of 1 Herald Plaza.

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Miami Herald

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Once the move is completed, probably in late May, the *Herald* will be located outside Miami's city limits for the first time in its 110-year history. It will also trade its view of Biscayne Bay, the Miami skyline, and close proximity to restaurants and stores, the Adrienne Arsht Center, the American Airlines Arena, and Museum Park for neighbors that include a branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, the U.S. Southern Command (which moved to a nearby site), Luminaire corporate offices, warehouses, and a cow pasture.

The new building reportedly features state-of-the-art technology, backup generators, bullet-proof glass, and a gym. But when Tim Chapman heard there won't be a dedicated police desk with a scanner, he decided the time had come to retire. He even canceled his subscription. "The *Herald* used to cover the news," Chapman says. "Now they just pretend to do it."

John Dorschner, another longtime writer at the *Herald*, disagrees with Chapman's views on the newspaper's decline. For decades Dorschner was the star feature writer at *Tropic* magazine. When *Tropic* folded in 1998, he moved to the business section. His last beat was covering the Jackson Health System.

"The people who are here are still doing very good journalism," Dorschner says. "There are fewer of them and it's a challenge. But I think, especially when compared to other papers, they're still doing some serious journalism."

Dorschner also decided not to head to the Doral office. His last day was February 27. "I'm 68 and I worked here 42 years," he tells the *BT* during a brief interview, "so I figured it's my time to go." A Miami Shores resident, Dorschner admits that the commute to Doral was "kind of a part of my decision to retire."

Several other editorial staffers have either left or declared their intention to leave within the past year. They include investigative reporter Scott Hiaasen, who is reportedly seeking a career in law; roving correspondent Frances Robles, who left in November to join the *New York Times*; school board specialist Laura Isensee, now working for Houston public radio; features and obituary



BT photo by Silvia Ros

Photographer Tim Chapman retired after 40 years: "The *Herald* used to cover the news. Now they just pretend to do it."



BT photo by Erik Bojnansky

The *Herald's* new home in Doral will be state-of-the-art, but it won't have a dedicated police desk.



Recently retired reporter John Dorschner: "The people who are here are still doing very good journalism."



After 19 years, versatile reporter Frances "Frenchie" Robles left for the *New York Times*.



Investigations editor Michael Sallah, who came to the *Herald* in 2005 after winning a Pulitzer Prize at the *Toledo Blade*, is now at the *Washington Post*.



Former *Herald* columnist Jim DeFede: "McClatchy overpaid for Knight Ridder and now is too far in debt."

writer Elinor Brecher (who will retire in the fall); Broward courts reporter Diana Moskowitz, who left to become a freelance writer in Los Angeles; and investigative editor and Pulitzer Prize-winner Michael Sallah, now with the *Washington Post*.

But this latest exodus is nothing compared to the number of layoffs and buyouts that occurred at the paper between 2008 and 2011, when nearly 600 jobs were eliminated, about 100 of them in the newsroom.

Few full-time journalists have been hired since, according to a *Herald* reporter. Instead, reporting duties are increasingly handled by part-time journalists and interns. Remaining *Herald* employees are also required to take an unpaid furlough week every six months.

"All of this comes from corporate," says the same reporter, who has asked that he not be identified. "If I wanted to do a story on the *Herald*, it would be how

corporate in Sacramento has set up what I call the death spiral. It's inexorably leading to the *Herald's* demise."

By Sacramento, the reporter means Sacramento, California, which is the corporate base of the McClatchy Company, a newspaper group founded in 1857. In June 2006, the McClatchy chain, which owned 12 daily papers at the time, bought Knight Ridder, a chain with 32 newspapers across the country, including the *Herald*, for \$4.5 billion and the assumption of \$2 billion of Knight Ridder's debt. "McClatchy is a dolphin swallowing a small whale," a media financial analyst commented to the *New York Times* at the time.

By March 2008, McClatchy was hemorrhaging. It was \$2.4 billion in debt, and its stock, once as high as \$70 a share, was trading below \$1. In December 2008,

the *New York Times* reported that McClatchy was interested in selling not just the *Herald's* land and building, but the newspaper operation itself.

"They overpaid for Knight Ridder, and now [McClatchy] is too far in debt," says Jim DeFede, a reporter for CBS4 and a former *Miami Herald* columnist. "The *Herald* is a profitable newspaper in and of itself. The problem is that it's not profitable enough to meet the company's needs."

The sale of the 1 Herald Plaza property did help McClatchy's bottom line. Of the \$236 million McClatchy received from Genting, \$165 million went to fund the company's pension liabilities, while \$65 million was used to pay off bond holders, according to *Herald* reports. The rest, \$6 million, will be used to fund the move to Doral.

The Miami Herald Media Company (MHMC) is investing another \$12

Continued on page 30

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Miami Herald

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million toward the newspaper's new home at 3511 NW 91st Ave. The new offices will be leased by MHMC for the next 15 years from GPA-I, a Memphis-based company. MHMC also bought six acres of adjacent land from GPA-I for \$3 million for its printing presses, which, according to workers on site, performed a successful test run on March 19. Phased moves from 1 Herald Plaza to Doral reportedly could begin April 26.

Last year MHMC president and *Herald* publisher David Landsberg told readers that McClatchy's investment in the Doral location was a positive sign. "McClatchy fully believes in us, and they obviously understand the opportunity that exists in this marketplace," he said in a January 2012 *Herald* column. "Let's thank McClatchy for the investment and faith they have shown in us."

McClatchy's financial situation appears to have improved. Its bonded debt is down slightly to \$1.7 billion, while its stock price hovers around \$3 a share. Last month McClatchy acquired Tru Measure, a Colorado-based



Current publisher David Landsberg: "Let's thank McClatchy for the investment and faith they have shown in us."

company that tracks the effectiveness of Internet ad campaigns, including that of McClatchy's online marketing tool impressLocal.

McClatchy also launched a pay wall called Subscriber Plus last year.



To offset declining revenue, McClatchy CEO Patrick Talamantes will explore "additional outsourcing opportunities that are still out there."

Subscribers pay \$69.95 a year in exchange for unlimited access to the *Miami Herald's* website. During a conference call with investors on February 7, Pat Talamantes, McClatchy's CEO, predicted



University of Miami's Joseph Treaster: "It's still a terrific newspaper. No news organization comes close to it in Miami."

that Subscriber Plus will earn \$20 million a year for the company.

However, overall revenue for the fourth quarter of 2012 was down five

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Miami Herald

Continued from page 30

percent compared to 2011's fourth quarter. In an effort to become more profitable and pay down the debt, Talamantes said the company will become more cost-efficient and alluded to such ideas as "regional centralization" and exploring "additional outsourcing opportunities."

Biscayne Times recently contacted McClatchy for more details on those ideas and the company's plans for its Miami holdings, but Peter Tira, McClatchy's communications director, referred media inquiries back to the *Herald*. "We're a decentralized company and we've been that way for 150 years," he said. "All those kinds of questions are best answered by the *Miami Herald*."

However, the *Miami Herald* declined numerous requests for comment. "We are really not doing any media until we get closer to our move," explained publisher Landsberg in an e-mail to the *BT*. "We would be happy to reach out to you then."

In spite of the cuts, the *Herald* remains the primary source of news for



Billionaire civic activist Norman Braman attributes the defeat of U.S. Rep. David Rivera to the *Herald*.

Miami-Dade County, notes University of Miami journalism professor Joseph Treaster, who was a *Herald* reporter briefly in the early 1960s before embarking on a 30-year career with the *New York Times*. "It's still a terrific newspaper," he says. "There's no news organization that comes close to it in Miami."

The *Herald* has fans among the pillars of the community too. "They're an important institution and they are the major newspaper of the community," says Norman Braman, CEO of Braman Enterprises. "They wield a lot



Retired reporter Martin Merzer was renowned for writing about big, breaking events while under deadline pressure.

of influence in the community and they have the ability of causing a lot of things to happen." For example, Braman credits the *Herald's* reporting for preventing the re-election of then-Congressman David



Arnold Markowitz, a 34-year veteran: "Last I heard, the city desk was down to ten reporters. There may be fewer now."

Rivera, who is now under federal criminal investigation.

Braman also praises the *Herald* for its scrutiny of former Hialeah Mayor

Continued on page 34

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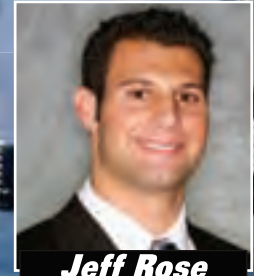


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Miami Herald

Continued from page 32

Julio Robaina's financial ties to convicted Ponzi schemer Luis Felipe Perez.

The *Herald* certainly enjoys a solid reputation for its reporting from the Caribbean and Latin America. "You can't get the coverage about Cuba that the *Herald* does [anywhere else]," Treaster says. "Jim Wyss is sending in great stuff from Latin America, and [the *Herald*] has very, very good coverage from Haiti." He also cites *El Nuevo Herald's* Juan Tamayo, who reports from Cuba and elsewhere and worked at the *Herald* for years; and Carol Rosenberg, who has been covering the Guantanamo Bay terrorist detention camp since the first prisoner arrived in 2002.

Martin Merzer, a *Miami Herald* reporter from 1979 to 2008, maintains that the paper still puts out good stories and has a staff of fine writers, photographers, and editorial cartoonists. Running down a list of a dozen names in an e-mail sent from his home in Tallahassee, he says, "Any newspaper in this nation would be delighted to have those



Former publisher David Lawrence: "I am optimistic about all of this. The *Herald* is still making money."

people and others like them who still work in the *Herald* newsroom."

Unfortunately, the newsroom can't do nearly as much as it once did, Merzer writes. "What's left of the staff seems heavily weighted toward interns, and



Arizona State University professor Tim McGuire: "Wipe out the \$1.6 billion in debt and McClatchy newspapers are in good shape."

much of the daily report seems thinly reported and/or misplayed. Also, the *Herald* has been getting badly beaten on some sports scandals and other stories lately."

Merzer notes that as the paper's editing ranks thinned, "the paper's technical quality has diminished, with frequent typos, grammatical and punctuation errors, erroneous geographical references."



Former *Herald* legal counsel Sam Terilli: "It's a very decentralized market. How much does someone living in West Kendall have in common with someone in North Miami Beach?"

Arnold Markowitz, a *Herald* reporter from 1967 until 2001, notes that the paper no longer has enough staff "to cover Miami effectively from any place, unless you define Miami as only inside the city limits. Last I heard the city desk

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Miami Herald

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was down to ten reporters. There may be fewer now. When management isn't allowed to replace people who leave, and those remaining have to take two-week unpaid furloughs, what can you expect?"

The *Herald's* online stories attract decent readership; according to the industry sources, 6.8 million unique browsers visited the website in 2012, while *El Nuevo Herald* received 1.3 million unique visitors. But despite this, there is ample evidence that the *Herald* for many years has been steadily losing readers of the print edition.

In July 1989, the authoritative Audit Bureau of Circulations (now the nonprofit Alliance for Audited Media) measured the *Herald's* weekday paid circulation at 424,563. By late September 1998, that figured had slipped 20 percent to 331,199.

By 2008 the weekday paid circulation was down to 240,223. As of September 30, 2012, it had dropped to 135,532.

That's a circulation plunge of 290,000 over 23 years, a period during which the population of Miami-Dade



On October 15, 1937, Frank Shutts (left) sold the *Miami Herald* to John S. Knight (right) and his brother James for \$2.25 million.

County increased by some 660,000 people. One humiliating result was that the paper had to remove a boastful slogan that ran across its masthead each day: "The Foremost Daily Newspaper of Florida." (The *St. Petersburg Times* topped the *Herald's* circulation and

market penetration in the late 1990s.)

David Lawrence, the *Herald's* publisher from 1989 to 1999, stresses that the paper's management has done a remarkable job under difficult circumstances. "I'm particularly impressed with David Landsberg, [*Herald* executive

editor] Mindy Marques, and [editorial board editor] Myriam Marquez," he says. "They've learned to do the best they can with diminished resources."

Lawrence admits that the thought of 1 Herald Plaza being demolished is "bothersome to me," but he's confident that the *Herald* can put out as good a paper in Doral as it did in Miami. "I'm optimistic about all of this," he says. "The *Herald* is still making money. It's not as though it's losing money.... The *Herald* will still employ 700 people or so, and put out a paper seven days a week." (Still, back in 1998, the *Herald* employed 2000 people.)

The *Miami Herald* definitely has seen better days, but at least it has a pulse. The same can't be said for the 12 daily newspapers that have been shuttered since March 2007, according to NewspaperDeathwatch.com, a website run by Paul Gillin, a senior fellow of the California-based Society for New Communications Research. The fallen include the 126-year-old *Cincinnati Post*, the 138-year-old *Tucson Citizen*, and the

Continued on page 38

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PROPERTIES

Miami Herald

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150-year-old *Rocky Mountain News*.

Nearly 20 more have either gone completely online or no longer publish daily, according to the website. The *Christian Science Monitor* became a print weekly in March 2009 and is transitioning toward an online-only platform. The *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* home-deliver print editions, but not daily, and are transitioning into daily online news sites. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* publishes print editions just three times a week. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* is now published online only.

According to the website Paper Cuts (newspaperlayoffs.com) run by former *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter Erica Smith, approximately 200 newspapers (including dailies and weeklies) across the country have either ceased operations or no longer produce print editions since 2007. Local publications on the list include the *Boca Raton News*, the *Coral Gables Gazette*, and the *South Florida Blade*.

Among other dire news for the newspaper industry, "between 2008 and



Frank Stoneman and his partner moved their Orlando newspaper to Miami after the big freeze of 1895, naming it the *Miami Evening Record*.

early 2010, eight major newspaper chains declared bankruptcy," according to a report by the Congressional Research Service. Among them was the Tribune



Legendary editor Lee Hills launched a series of exposés targeting illegal gambling and corrupt politicians, which earned the *Herald* its first Pulitzer Prize in 1951.

Company, owner of *Chicago Tribune*, the *Sun-Sentinel* in Broward, the *Los Angeles Times*, 12 other newspapers, and

Photos courtesy of the Florida Memory Project

ten television and radio stations. Investor Sam Zell ran up \$13 billion in debt a year or so after he bought the Tribune Company in 2008. As part of its reorganization plan, the company plans to sell off its newspapers.

Also within the past five years, the newspaper industry has shed thousands of jobs. Using data she collected, Smith told the *St. Louis Journalism Review* that at least 39,781 layoffs and buyouts occurred within the newspaper industry between January 1, 2008, and July 2012. The number may have been as many as 50,000, she added, since some print publications did not provide exact figures.

"Newspapers are still profitable and they still make money, but their revenue has been declining for about six years," says Gillin of NewspaperDeathwatch.com. Not helping matters is the massive debt the big chains accumulated when they purchased dailies, weeklies, and other media companies during the 1980s and 1990s, he explains. The newspaper industry, along with the rest of the economy, contracted, and these papers suddenly found that they couldn't pay off their debt.

Continued on page 40

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Alvah Chapman was present at the creation of the Knight Ridder company, and later became its chairman.

Miami Herald

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The Internet poses another challenge to print publication. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of most newspaper advertising still comes from print ads, according to a February 2013 *Editor & Publisher* article. And a study released in late 2012 by the Pew Research Center concludes that newspaper readership is on the decline. When asked "Where did you get your news yesterday?" only six percent of 18- to 24-year-olds said they received news from print sources. Those ages 40 to 49 totaled just 16 percent, and for those between 50 and 64 years old, the total was still just 30 percent. Pew also found that 56 percent of Americans surveyed in 1991 got their news from newspapers. By 2012 that figure was down to just 29 percent.

During that February 7 conference call with investors, McClatchy CEO Pat Talamantes assured listeners that his company was making the transition from print to digital. Although total ad revenue was down 6 percent for McClatchy's newspapers, digital advertising went up 4 percent, he said, and digital advertising made up 20 percent of total advertising revenues in the fourth quarter of 2012, compared to 19 percent for the same period in 2011.

But even shifting to the Internet may not be enough to help McClatchy and other newspaper companies. Trends indicate that the public is moving away from newspapers altogether, and from television news. Though digital news



Miami Today publisher and editor Michael Lewis believes the *Herald's* golden age ended when the *Miami News* shut down on December 31, 1988.

consumption is up, news consumption in general is dropping. The Pew study noted that "29 percent of those younger than 25 say they got no news yesterday, either from digital news platforms, including cell phones and social networks, or traditional news platforms." People are apparently spending more time on social networking and game sites than on news-gathering sites.

Marketingcharts.com reported on January 30 that nearly one in three marketers participating in an American Marketing Association survey plans to reduce its ad focus from newspapers. Meanwhile 82 percent of respondents plan to turn more to mobile media, primarily cell phones.

"It's all going to cell phones," says Jay Fredrickson, a former *Miami Herald* advertising account executive who now works as an advertising sales manager for hibu.com. "That's really ultimately the biggest nail in the coffin for newspapers. Smart phones are going to totally dominate the entire advertising market."

Actually, the path of the advertising market is unclear, argues Tim McGuire, a journalism professor at Arizona State University and past editor of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, a former McClatchy paper. "The fact that gets overlooked is that advertisers are pretty friggin' confused right now, too," he says. "They used to understand exactly how to reach audiences. They might be confused about it now."

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For newspaper industry analyst John Morton, the *Herald's* turning point was the sudden death of Knight Ridder chairman Jim Batten in 1995.

Miami Herald

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Confusion in the ad market is more bad news for newspaper companies because advertising has been subsidizing newspapers for the last 100 years, McGuire notes.

That standard advertising model may not be as lucrative for online publications, according to the Pew Research Center's data in September 2012. An online *Atlantic* article noted, "Since 2003, print ads have fallen from \$45 billion to \$19 billion. Online ads have only grown from \$1.2 to \$3.3 billion. Stop and think about that gap. The total ten-year increase in digital advertising isn't even enough to overcome the average single-year decline in print ads since 2003. Ugh."

Ironically, the *Herald's* executives had a glimpse of the future decades ago. The paper's previous corporate owner, Knight Ridder, invested \$50 million experimenting with electronic media in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Called Viewtron, the idea was to send *Miami Herald* and Associated Press stories to a subscriber's computer through special terminals and software. The service was expensive, yet the number of subscribers increased from 3000 in 1983, when it was launched in South Florida, to 20,000 in 1986, according to a March 1986 *InfoWorld* article. Knight Ridder determined that it was impossible to make a profit, so the project was killed.

"It was ahead of its time, far ahead of its time," says Sam Terilli, former



Historian Arva Moore Parks on Jim Batten: "He had great respect from everyone. If he hadn't died, the *Herald* wouldn't be in the pickle it's in now."

special counsel for the *Miami Herald* who is now an associate professor for UM's School of Communication. And Viewtron was far more primitive than the Internet. Today's product-sellers don't need traditional media — newspapers, magazines, and broadcast television — as much as they used to.

"[Businesses] have their own web pages and other avenues of commerce," Terilli says. "There are other ways to get to consumers, like social media, mobile. That affects where advertisers go."

Finally, Miami-Dade County is a particularly tough news market, says Terilli. "It's a very decentralized market. How much does someone living in West Kendall have in common with someone in North Miami Beach? This is a multiple geographic market in multiple communities, and it's hard to be everyone's local newspaper."

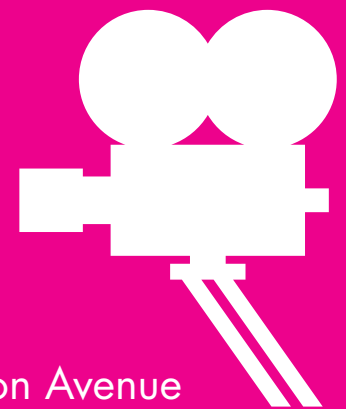
There are also the language barriers, which is why the *Herald* introduced its Spanish-language newspaper, first as the supplement *El Miami Herald* in 1975, then as the expanded *El Nuevo Herald* in 1987, and finally as a stand-alone paper in 1998.

But going for cost-efficiencies and new platforms and multiple markets may not be enough to save the *Miami Herald*. A Pew Center Research Project for Excellence in Journalism report in January 2013 concluded that all their cost-saving measures aren't helping the newspaper owners. Cuts in newsroom staff, and the

Continued on page 44



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Miami Herald

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resulting reduction of news coverage, do not go unnoticed, and consumers are speaking with their wallets. "Nearly one-third — 31% — of people say they have deserted a particular news outlet because it no longer provides the news and information they had grown accustomed to, according to the survey of more than 2000 U.S. adults in early 2013," the report states. "And those most likely to have walked away are better educated, wealthier, and older than those who did not — in other words, they are people who tend to be most prone to consume and pay for news."

Former *Herald* reporter Martin Merzer maintains that the rise of the Internet and the recession hurt his paper, and that poor management decisions compounded the disaster. For example, access to ever-changing online news pages was free, while the *Herald* still charged for its print version, which had a slower, almost obsolete news cycle. That's a mistake most other newspapers around the country made, he adds, although the *Herald's* website did charge an archive fee to retrieve older stories.

Another mistake, according to Merzer, was the campaign to downsize the *Herald's* newsroom through attrition during the 1990s, when the Internet was still in its infancy. Now, as the *Herald* prepares to charge for online content, he says, readers will be offered less original material to read.

"A large newsroom produces more stories and art than a smaller newsroom, making the newspaper more dynamic, more relevant, and more important to its readers," Merzer says.

In a way, the *Herald* owes its very existence to failure and miscalculation.

In 1901, Frank Stoneman, the father of author and environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and A.L. LaSalle started the *Orlando Daily Herald*. Orlando's economy was still wrecked by the Great Freeze of 1895, in which winter storms destroyed the citrus crops, so the two men moved south to Miami and founded the *Miami Evening Record*.

Business was so good that Stoneman and LaSalle bought a two-story building at S. Miami Avenue and Second Street to serve as the *Evening Record's* offices. By 1907, they had bought the struggling *Miami Morning News*, and the *Miami*



P. Anthony "Tony" Ridder, who succeeded Jim Batten as Knight Ridder chairman, was known around the *Herald* as "Darth Ridder" for his insistence on cost-efficiency and higher profit margins.

Morning-News Record was born, paid for, in part, by loans from railway baron and Miami pioneer Henry Flagler.

Then came financial troubles. "Unfortunately, LaSalle and Stoneman chose a recession year to plunge into debt," wrote author Nixon Smiley in his 1974 book *Knights of the Fourth Estate*.

Frank Shutts, the founder of the Shutts & Bowen law firm and the court-appointed receiver of the *Morning-News Record*, convinced Flagler that he himself should take ownership of the paper to counter anti-Flagler stories that routinely appeared in another local paper, the *Miami Metropolis*. Flagler reluctantly agreed, but only if Shutts would sign on as publisher of his new venture. On December 1, 1910, Shutts renamed the paper the *Miami Herald* and hired Frank Stoneman as editor.

A couple of years later, when Flagler objected to Shutts using *Herald* funds to purchase a car and provide the salary of a chauffeur, Shutts responded by offering to buy the paper for \$29,000. The deal closed in 1912, but Shutts was forced to borrow more money to replace printing equipment and expand circulation, which he doubled from 2000 at the time of his purchase to 4000 in 1917. (The 1910 U.S. Census records that fewer than 5500 people were living in Miami, according to HistoryMiami.)

Twenty-seven years later, Shutts was trying, through a broker, to sell bonds to

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Joann Hennessey, Esq.



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Miami Herald

Continued from page 40

finance the *Herald*’s debt. The purchaser was to have been John Knight, who published *Akron Beacon Journal* and *Massillon Independent* in Ohio with his brother James. But instead of buying the bonds, John Knight journeyed to Miami with a counteroffer: He wanted to buy the *Herald*.

On October 15, 1937, the John and James Knight bought the *Herald* from Shutts for \$2.25 million. By that time, Miami had three daily papers: the *Miami Herald*, the *Miami News*, and the *Miami Tribune*. Within a couple of months, John Knight made Miami a two-newspaper town. He bought the *Tribune* and then closed it, sold off the paper’s printing press and building, hired half of its staff (three reporters, an editor, a photographer, and a circulation manager), and laid off the rest.

In 1942 the *Herald* hired Lee Hills, an editor who believed that a good newspaper should be the conscience of the community and “become involved in community affairs while reserving the right to criticize,” according to a December 2012 article in *Preservation Today*, the magazine of the Dade Heritage Trust.

Under Hill’s leadership and the Knight brothers’ encouragement, the *Herald* launched a series of exposés targeting Greater Miami’s illegal gambling parlors, corruption of local and state politicians, and the enrichment of organized crime syndicates traced back to Chicago. The reporting, which included extensive coverage of the U.S. Senate Crime Investigating Committee’s hearings on Miami’s gambling parlors, earned the *Herald* its first Pulitzer Prize, in 1951.

The *Herald* had a direct hand in the demolition of two gambling houses, the Frolics Club and the Little Palm Club. Their structures, as well as various other buildings along 631 feet of bayfront, were razed in the late 50s, after the *Herald* purchased the properties to construct a \$30 million building for news operations.

“That building never should have been built on the bay,” acknowledges former *Herald* lawyer Terilli. Besides calling it an “aesthetic travesty” Terilli contends that 1 Herald Plaza “made no sense in terms of business — having a printing plant and facility backed up against the bay on the eastern edge of Miami, as opposed to a strategic facility in the suburbs.”



McClatchy CEO Gary Pruitt guided the purchase of KRI for \$4.5 billion plus \$2 billion in debt, and commented: “Because newspapers are out of favor, we feel we got a bargain in acquiring Knight Ridder.”

James Knight, who oversaw the construction, built big because he wanted to be sure the new building would not only withstand hurricanes but also future growth, all the way up to 1980. For decades, the *Herald* had been growing rapidly. In 1937, when the Knights bought the paper, it had an average circulation of 55,000. Its workforce had grown from 383 to 1113 in August 1958, when *Herald* executives announced their intention to move from 200 S. Miami Ave.

The massive new building opened in 1963, and the paper kept growing, both in staff and in reputation. In 1974 *Time* magazine included the *Miami Herald* in its list of top ten U.S. dailies. That same year, 1 Herald Plaza became the headquarters of Knight Ridder, the public company formed after the merger, also in 1974, of the Knight and Ridder newspaper chains. Assisting in the business marriage was Alvah Chapman, who had been the *Herald*’s president and publisher since 1969 (and no relation to photographer Tim Chapman). Chapman would go on to become CEO of Knight Ridder from 1976 to 1989 (he died in 2008).

While publisher Chapman enhanced the business reputation of the *Herald* and Knight Ridder (as well as the *Herald*’s power base in the community through the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and the mysterious Non-Group of local powerbrokers in the 1980s), reporter Gene Miller helped build the

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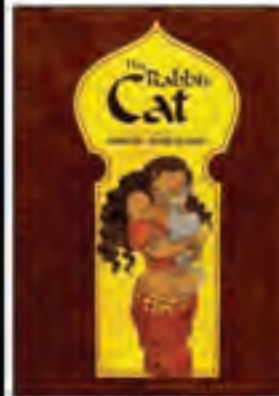
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Miami Herald

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paper's journalistic reputation.

Working in the newsroom between 1957 and 2001, Miller brought the *Herald* its second and third Pulitzers, in 1967 and 1976. As editor, he recruited recent graduates from colleges around the country. "They had some of the best and brightest at the *Herald*," says UM professor Treaster.

Former reporter Merzer recalls those glory days as well: "We had a large, energetic and ambitious Broward bureau. We had numerous state bureaus, stretching along both coasts from Key West to Tallahassee. We had resident correspondents in many parts of Latin America and in the Middle East and in China."

Jay Fredrickson, who worked at the paper between 1981 and 1991, remembers the bravado that reached even into the sales offices. "We used to have a slogan at the *Miami Herald*," he remembers. "It was 'I am from the *Miami Herald* and I can ruin your day if I wanted to.' That's how powerful that newspaper was. If somebody did something bad, it was front page on the



Soon to be demolished: The *Herald* newsroom in 2012.

local section. You might as well head out of town."

Michael Lewis, veteran editor and publisher of the business weekly *Miami Today*, believes that the *Herald*'s golden age ended when the *Miami News* shut down on December 31, 1988. It was the very existence of the *Miami News*, he maintains, that made the

Herald as good a news organization as it was.

With a circulation no higher than 90,000, the *News*, where Lewis worked as assistant managing editor, was by far the smaller of the two daily papers. "We were extremely competitive," Lewis says. "I personally felt that the *Miami News* was a better newspaper. We were undermanned, had a much smaller staff, but

we had the same high-quality stories."

Making the two newsrooms all the more competitive was the fact that the *Miami Herald* and the *Miami News* were housed in the same building. In 1966 the *News*, owned by Cox Newspapers, which also published the *Palm Beach Post*, was losing money. But instead of seeking to eliminate the competition, *Herald* owner John Knight sought to sustain it. Knight "felt strongly that cities needed two newspapers that offered alternative voices," wrote Howard Kleinberg, the last editor of the *Miami News*, in *Preservation Today*. Knight worked out a deal with Cox Newspapers in which the *Herald* handled distribution and ad sales for the *News*, but the newsrooms remained separate, an arrangement that allowed the paper to stay alive another 22 years.

For John Morton, a Maryland-based newspaper industry consultant, the downturn for the *Herald* and the rest of the Knight Ridder chain began when Alvah Chapman's successor, Jim Batten, died suddenly of a brain tumor in 1995. Under Batten's leadership, Knight Ridder was "very journalistically oriented," Morton says. "He cared more

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Miami Herald

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about the quality of its journalism than the quality of its net earnings.”

Arva Moore Parks, a local historian and author affiliated with the Dade Heritage Trust, describes Batten as a “newspaper man’s newspaper man.” “He had great respect from everyone in town, including me” she recalls. “If he hadn’t died, the *Herald* wouldn’t be in the pickle it’s in now.”

With Batten’s passing, P. Anthony “Tony” Ridder became CEO. The former publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News* had risen within the Knight Ridder company and was appointed president of Knight Ridder’s newspaper division in 1986, earning the nickname “Darth Ridder” among reporters for his insistence on cost-efficiency and higher profit margins.

“At the time [1986], Chapman was worried that Knight Ridder...might be a target for one of the corporate raiders then roaming the landscape,” Devin Leonard wrote in a December 2001 *Fortune* profile of Ridder. “He knew he had to rein in costs — even then analysts carped about the company’s fat payrolls — but Chapman and his lieutenants were too much the products of the old Knight culture to take on the company’s strong-willed editors. Ridder was different. He considered it a personal challenge to impose financial discipline on the free-spirited, profligate papers.”

Within this new budget-driven environment, reporters and editors began to leave the *Herald* in droves, and when they left, their positions went unfilled or were eliminated, wrote Jim DeFede, then a staffer at *Miami New Times*, in 1995.

“When I look back on that story, I thought that was going to be the low point of the *Herald*,” DeFede says today. “Now it looks like the good-time salad days for the *Herald*.”

Indeed, Tony Ridder may have been pushing for profit margins as high as 25 percent at the *Herald*, and employees from circulation and production were getting pink slips. But so far the journalists weren’t being laid off. Ridder told *Fortune* that he wanted the newspapers within the chain to live within their means, instead of being subsidized by the money-making papers. Still, like the Knight executives of old, he tended to be reluctant to lay off reporters.

“The truth is that he’s pleasing no one,” declared Leonard in the 2001

Fortune article, “not his journalists, and not Wall Street either, which looks at Knight Ridder’s estimated 2001 profit margin of 18.4% and wonders why it can’t get its margins up to 25%.”

Complaining loudest for those higher profits was Bruce Sherman, founder of Naples-based Private Capital Management and leader of a frustrated group of shareholders. In March 2006, Sherman, whose firm was investing heavily in newspaper stocks, gave Ridder an ultimatum: Sell the company’s shares or face a hostile takeover.

Knight Ridder lacked a dual-stock structure, like that of the New York Times Company and McClatchy, which protects the interests of a company’s founders. Ridder put the company up for sale and began telling potential buyers, according to an August 2006 *New York Times* story, that with a 5 percent cut of Knight Ridder’s 18,000-person workforce, \$150 million could be saved, thereby boosting profits beyond the current 20 percent.

Besides owning 32 newspapers, Knight Ridder had partial ownership of such online classified sites as Cars.com, Apartments.com, and CareerBuilder.com back in 2006. (Seven years later, the online classified sites were among the few bright spots in a McClatchy investor report from February of last year.)

Knight Ridder had real estate as well, including 1 Herald Plaza and surrounding land, which, thanks to the Adrienne Arsht Center, had become attractive to developers. (The *Herald* had championed the development of a performing arts center and even donated land for it in 1992.)

So the Knight Ridder package included profitable businesses and other valuable assets. Still, the price was steep, and McClatchy was the only bidder for the company, paying \$67.25 a share, a rate that was more than nine times Knight Ridder’s 2005 cash flow, reported media analyst Ken Doctor in 2009. Other companies entertained the idea of buying Knight Ridder but had backed away after seeing “cracks” in the company’s business model, Doctor wrote.

In spite of the misgivings by financial analysts, Gary Pruitt, McClatchy’s CEO at the time, remained upbeat. “We do our best not to be influenced by the current sentiments on Wall Street, but rather to look at facts and look at

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evidence and make long-term decisions for the company based on what the evidence shows," he told *Herald* staffers during a June 2006 visit. "Because newspapers are out of favor, we feel we got a bargain in acquiring Knight Ridder."

A former *Herald* sales executive can't help but be amused when recounting that day to the *BT*. "He was Mr. Cheerleader," the sales exec laughs. "He was saying, 'Oh, this is going to be great. This is going to be fantastic.' Who was the most skeptical? The reporters. And they were right."

To pay for Knight Ridder's assumed debt, McClatchy sold 12 of its newly acquired Knight Ridder papers for \$2 billion, including Tony Ridder's old paper, the *San Jose Mercury News*. The *Miami Herald* was among the 20 Knight Ridder papers kept because McClatchy deemed Miami a growth market.

But by February 2007, CEO Pruitt was acknowledging in a press release that times were "turbulent" for media companies. In an effort to reduce the debt following the Knight Ridder sale, McClatchy sold the *Minnesota Star Tribune* for \$530 million. Less than a decade earlier, McClatchy had paid \$1.2 billion for the paper.

McClatchy remained officially mum on reports that it was looking to sell the *Herald*. In December 2008, Jorge Pérez, CEO of the Related Companies, had acknowledged to a *Herald* reporter that he and Florida Crystals CEO Alfonso Fanjul had spoken to McClatchy about buying the *Herald*, although "nothing has materialized." Asked for confirmation, a McClatchy executive refused to respond to what she called market rumors, even from her own company's reporters.

Local media consultant Seth Gordon wouldn't be surprised if the *Herald* is still for sale.

"Every time there's cost-cutting, I think maybe they're dressing it up to be sold," Gordon says. He thinks the paper "might be better in local hands." That way the *Herald's* owners can "have a finger on the pulse of the community and forge a new relationship with readers and build new business ties."

Former *Herald* editor Bob Radziewicz, now a UM journalism professor, disagrees that the paper will be sold, noting that the *Herald's* investment in Doral is proof that the paper intends to stick around. "McClatchy wouldn't be

investing any more money in the *Herald* if they didn't feel it was going to be a McClatchy operation."

One problem with corporate-owned newspapers is that they are infested with debt, says Arizona State journalism professor McGuire. "Wipe out the \$1.6 billion in debt, and McClatchy newspapers are in good shape," he says. "It's debt that's overwhelming every newspaper company."

McGuire predicts that locally based web operations with small staffs will spring into existence. "The news ecosystem is going to expand," he says. "People want more stuff." The challenge, though, is figuring out a model that will enable a news operation to make money.

In spite of the debt that established newspapers have taken on, and the revenue lost to the web, media analysts say existing newspapers still have value, including name recognition, experienced staffs, and circulation lists. "The lists have all the value," maintains Gillin of NewspaperDeathwatch.com.

There's also the sense among investors that the market may have bottomed out for publicly traded newspaper companies. "It's hard to imagine that their value is going any lower than it is right now," he says.

So what does the future hold for the *Miami Herald*? "Something called the *Miami Herald* will be here in five years and probably in ten years, though no one can say what form it will take," Martin Merzer states. "Twenty years? I'm not so sure."

Nowadays, photographer Tim Chapman is more concerned with the past. Twenty years ago he discovered that *Herald* archivists were more likely to throw away old photographic negatives and pictures than to save them. So he worked out a deal with *Herald* executives to allow photographers to keep their pictures. At his home Chapman now has many thousands of pictures stacked in boxes.

Those photos, Chapman is certain, have value. They provide a window to Miami's past, a time when newspapers helped to define their communities and people relied on them for vital information. Chapman intends to donate the collection to a local organization that will preserve and catalogue them, so that, years from now, the era of powerful, profitable newspapers won't be forgotten.

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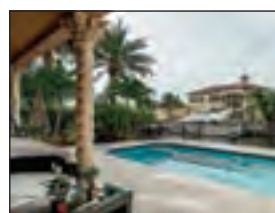
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Going, Going, Gone!

Both the old INS building and Biscayne Plaza across 79th Street have been sold

By Erik Bojnansky
BT Senior Writer

The 12-story building at the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and 79th Street once served as the headquarters of a real estate company that caused an environmental disaster in the Everglades.

After that, it was where immigrants came to stand in line for long hours in an effort to obtain green cards or political asylum from the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

And then: nothing. It has sat empty for nearly five years.

Last summer a pair of sibling developers quietly bought the building, commonly known as the INS building, and a small Goodwill-anchored retail strip behind it for \$5 million. They're still figuring out what they're going to do with

it, but one of their company executives assures the *BT* that they believe in the Upper Eastside and the rest of Miami's Biscayne Corridor.

"We love that neighborhood, and we're happy and humble to have found a site and take part in the area's exciting renaissance," says Justin Toal, chief investment officer and senior principal of the Edgewater-based Fifteen Group.

And how are they going to be part of that renaissance? Ask them again in a few months.

"I think in the next quarter we should have a much better idea about our plans," Toal says.

Founded inside a Fort Lauderdale warehouse in 1992 by Mark and Ian Sanders, the Fifteen Group started out as a consulting company for commercial and resort property owners in New York,

the Bahamas, and the Virgin Islands. By 1996 the Sanders brothers were buying properties, accumulating a portfolio of 20,000 residential units across the nation, according to the company's website.

Since 2008 the Fifteen Group has been seeking to build a \$2 billion residential and retail project called New Wyvernwood in East Los Angeles.

They've also been very busy in Miami.

In November 2010, the Sanders brothers snatched up six acres of land and an 8400-square-foot office building at N. Miami Avenue and 36th Street



The old INS building and adjoining property is now owned by Mark and Ian Sanders of the Fifteen Group.

from Scott Podolsky and Alex Forkosh for \$5.3 million.

Nine months later, in August 2011, the Fifteen Group bought a foreclosure

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Changing the Planet One Kernel at a Time

Shawnee Chasser's green popcorn is hitting the big time

By Harriette Yahr
Special to the *BT*

Living in a treehouse in the middle of Little Haiti was the furthest thing from Shawnee Chasser's mind when she arrived in glitzy Los Angeles in the late 1960s to pursue her dream of becoming a movie star. Walking across the country for a political cause seemed equally far removed from reality.

But Chasser's life has never followed a prefab path. And at age 62, after checking off plenty of atypical boxes on her lifelong "have done" list, she's now doing what any self-proclaimed

hippie still full of energy does — she's launched a green business to help change the world, one kernel at a time.

Drop into any Whole Foods Market and you will find Shawnee's Green-thumb Popcorn, an addictive mix of organic popcorn and health food staples, such as nutritional yeast and spirulina. It's hard not to eat the whole bag in one sitting, and it's been flying off the shelves. On a recent trip to the Aventura store, there were no more bags in stock.

Brent King, regional grocery coordinator, says Whole Foods is always looking for unique local food producers who share their commitment to offer the



Shawnee Chasser sporting a popcorn head band at her North Miami home.

highest-quality products. "Shawnee's passion to create a tasty and nutritional popcorn snack made her a perfect fit for us, which is evident by its popularity with our customers and team members."

Turning hobbies into business ventures is popular these days. Whether born of financial necessity or a desire

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BT photos by Silvia Ros

Hide the Elevators

The concept of Active Design in architecture comes to Miami

By Helen Hill
Special to the *BT*

A few years ago the message “You are where you live” alluded to the sophisticated lifestyles offered by new condominium developments. Now the concept of “Active Design,” integrating architecture, planning, and personal health in cities, neighborhoods, and individual buildings, takes living well to a whole new level.

The Center for Active Design in New York evolved as a response to the current public health epidemics of obesity and related chronic diseases. By increasing opportunities for daily physical activity and healthy eating, urban designers can play a crucial role in preventing and controlling these problems.

For example, did you know that just two additional minutes of stair-climbing a day — about six floors — can burn enough calories to offset the average U.S. adult’s annual weight gain? Studies indicate that improving access to places for physical activity can result in a 25-percent increase in the number of people who exercise at least three times a week.

In New York City, strategic improvements to public spaces resulted in a 161-percent increase in the number of people who walk and bike regularly. Active Design also offers an economic benefit by reducing long-term operating costs through increased energy efficiency. When people choose stairs over elevators, bikes instead of cars, or physical activity instead of screen time, they burn calories instead of electricity and carbon fuels.

The three-year-old guidelines for Active Design are the product of a collaboration between the American Institute of Architects, AIA New York, New York City agencies like the Department of Health, private-sector architects and developers, and academic partners.

In the big picture, urban design strategies create neighborhoods, streets, and outdoor spaces that encourage walking, bicycling, and recreation. In new residential and office buildings, the placement and design of stairs, elevators, and indoor and outdoor spaces sets the scene for active living.

Many of the guidelines’ strategies can be applied to existing buildings as well. These include unlocking the doors to stairwells so people can walk up and down. (Implementing a key card or code system for security is suggested; fire doors, which usually inhibit easy access, can be redesigned to open and close when required in an emergency.)

Getting people to use the stairs can be as simple as making the environment more appealing with paint, artwork, and visible signage. Biking becomes more desirable when there are designated places to securely store bikes, while safe recreational spaces invite children’s play. The community as a whole can enjoy growing fresh, healthy herbs and vegetables in roof-top or street-level gardens.

While the exercise facilities and social rooms recommended by the guidelines are already featured in most Miami multifamily buildings, other ideas may take a while to fly in Miami. Active Design is still new here, and its guidelines have yet to be formally adopted. Designed for northern climes, they may need some adaptation to South Florida’s tropical climate and different recreational opportunities.

Rick Bell, executive director of the AIA New York Chapter’s Center for Architecture and a conference organizer for



Photos by Robin Hill

The new Miami-Dade College classroom and activities building seems to float above the ground.



Wide stairways with windows and light encourage students to use legs instead of elevators.

the Center for Active Design, says that Miami’s great advantage is an extraordinary climate that allows for outdoor activities year-round. “Physical activities become part of everyday life instead of only at weekends,” he notes. “Exercise is more than a treadmill or stationary bike in the bedroom.”

Bell believes that single-family neighborhoods function better as mixed-use communities, with clusters of stores and places to get a cup of coffee or a snack.

“Nobody is going to walk two miles to get a bagel, but half-a-mile is doable,” he says, adding, “communities should have shaded benches for resting and perhaps contemplative mini gardens and other amenities to make walking pleasurable.”

Bell was a featured speaker at a recent event held downtown at Miami-Dade College’s Wolfson Campus. Organized by the Miami chapter of the AIA, the panel brought together Bell; Dr. Karen Lee, director of the Built Environment and Active Design Program for the New York City Health Department; Karen Hamilton of the South Florida Regional Planning Council; David Weller, Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization; and Karen Weller, RN, director of Community Health and Planning, Miami-Dade Health Department.

Moderator Bernard Zyscovich, head of Miami-based Zyscovich Architects, had a special interest in the topic, as his firm designed the new classroom building on the Wolfson campus. This is the first local project to incorporate Active Design guidelines and be recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council for an “Innovation in Design” credit, awarded for “exemplary performance” in green design.

“We accepted the challenge to incorporate the Active Design guidelines because of an even bigger challenge to our community — young people in Miami and South Florida have a statistically higher rate of obesity and related health

Continued on page 54

Popcorn

Continued from page 52

for a more independent or fulfilling livelihood, it's out of the kitchen and into the weekend farmer's market — or local bistro or sometimes national chain. Think of the microbrew beer craze (Miami has jumped on that wagon), or the spate of chocolatiers, artisan bakers, or whisky distillers now making the foodie rounds. *Portlandia*, the hilarious eco-hipster satire airing on IFC (with clips on Hulu) riffed off artisanal popcorn this past season.

For Chasser the impetus to start her business was neither trend nor the economy. In 2008 big change started in. She moved off of her brother Ray Chasser's Earth-N-Us Farm in Little Haiti, where she had lived (in a multilevel treehouse) for 15 years. And in a pivotal and heartbreaking moment the next year, her son, Joshua Braden Levy, died.

Chasser was devastated. At the same time, she felt the pull of life. "Josh taught me that we only have a short time on this planet," she says. "You only have today. He kicked my 'be here now' philosophy into high gear."

So where did Chasser turn for inspiration to get something going in life again? She didn't have to look far. For years she'd been making popcorn with special ingredients and brown-bagging it for movie outings with friends and serving it up to her kids and grandkids. Everyone in her circle loved it, including her son Josh. Why wouldn't everyone else?

Plus her inspiration had a pedigree.

In 1969 Chasser left her hometown of Miami (she attended Miami Norland Senior High) to pursue an acting career in Los Angeles. It ended up being the political climate of the times, not the movie world, that transformed her life.

"I had just finished playing the part of Barbra Streisand in *Funny Girl*,"



Family and friends at a "pop and bag" session in an industrial kitchen.

Chasser recalls, "so I thought I was the greatest star ever. When I got to L.A., I was totally disillusioned. Everyone wanted to know my body size and body weight, and I didn't think that had anything to do with my talent. It was one disillusionment after another until I started meeting political activists, and I realized I'd met my tribe."

So Chasser decided to dedicate her life to creating peace on earth and headed over to UCLA to join the Vietnam war protests. She was still wearing her false eyelashes, she says, but soon ditched those for bare feet. And while others brought peanut-butter sandwiches along for fuel, Chasser brought her popcorn.

In 1986 Chasser signed onto the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament, walking from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., with her young kids, Wren and Josh, in tow. Her popcorn, which people referred to as her "famous popcorn" back then, fed hundreds along the nine-month trek, and was cooked up in a roving kitchen.

As to the recipe, Chasser says she's added different ingredients — nutritional yeast ("the B-12 supplement"), garlic powder, cayenne pepper, and more — year after year, with the goal of creating a complete meal. The final ingredient she added was spirulina, a blue-green algae touted as having a wide range of health benefits.

Chasser says her biggest challenge is convincing people that green stuff can taste good. "It's not easy being green," she laughs, then gets earnest. She really believes in her product. "Once people taste it, they say, 'Wow, it really *is* good.' That's what's kept me going all these years — how people love it once they try it. Even my best friends who eat at Burger King." (Chasser also points out her popcorn — which takes its "green-thumb" name from the color your fingers get when you dig into a bag — contains no genetically modified ingredients.)

As for the business operation, it's down-home, which makes sense for a company with an unpretentious CEO

who still lives in a backyard treehouse ("I can't live inside") and spends her life off-line ("We should be connecting more with the soil, not a computer").

At a recent "pop and bag" session held at an industrial kitchen near Aventura, where she rents space, a friends-and-family assembly line worked the goods: measuring ingredients, mixing in freshly popped corn, bagging, sealing, labeling, filling boxes.

Art Friedrich, who assists Chasser with day-to-day responsibilities, confirms that they ship 25 cases each week to all 19 Whole Foods throughout Florida. They're in the application process for national distribution with Whole Foods, and Chasser is excited about the new store opening on Biscayne Boulevard at 123rd Street. It's located not far from her North Miami home, which will make checking shelves for stock a lot easier.

Chasser talks about the similarities between running a business and her previous incarnations as an actress and peacenik and treehouse designer, and even when she outfitted a trailer with solar power to drive her kids around the country. "I've always been a go-forward person," she says. "If I didn't have a project, my life didn't work. This is just another project for me. The fact that it's such a big project, I have been injected — and this is from my son Josh — with the reality it's a short time we're here and I need to hurry up."

This is her final project, she says, together with opening a homeless shelter for women, which she hopes the popcorn will fund, but that's a future chapter of her story.

Vegan, kosher, 95-percent organic, and gluten-free, Shawnee's Greenthumb Popcorn is currently available in all local Whole Foods, as well as mom-and-pops such as The Honey Tree and the Upper Eastside Farmers Market.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Active Design

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issues than most other areas of the country," says Zyscovich. "This issue requires both education and action, therefore a student services and classroom building with a variety of functions, including a fitness center and food service, provided a wonderful opportunity to make a difference."

Building #8 on NE 2nd Street blends well with the original 1960s building

across the street, and is compatible with other Miami-Dade College buildings that rely on the use of durable, low-maintenance, pre-cast concrete panels. However, the material is used more creatively here, with panels moving in and out on different levels, creating street-facing walls with implied movement.

At the ground level, the line of pre-cast concrete undulates above an uninterrupted glass wall and makes the building appear to hover above the

ground. Windows on upper floors are not uniform, but expand where there is a significant interior public space.

"College-age students appreciate buildings that allow them to feel a part of their environment — in this case, a vibrant campus in an international city," says Thorn Grafton, director of sustainable initiatives at Zyscovich Architects.

The building's transparency rises with the light-flooded main stairway, which anchors the space directly

adjacent to the entry doors. The open stairway is designed as a sculptural element, to encourage students to walk up and down and enjoy social engagement and views of the urban campus. The elevators, per Active Design guidelines, are intentionally less prominent, located in the rear corner of the building.

Another innovative design feature takes education out of the confines of the

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Gone!

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judgment that gave the brothers control of 25 unsold units within the bankrupt Platinum condo at 480 NE 30th St. and an adjacent 2.7-acre bayfront site zoned for a high-rise. That same month, the Fifteen Group paid \$9.1 million for a two-acre site at 3131 NE 7th Ave., where the proposed 300-unit ICE II condominium was to have been built.

Then in June 2012, the Fifteen Group bought the old INS building and its 122,600-square-foot parcel from Evelyn Goldbloom. The company financed the purchase with a \$3.5 million loan from BridgeInvest a month later.

All of these land buys have been made within or near neighborhoods the Fifteen Group is excited about. “We are very bullish on the Biscayne Corridor, Midtown Miami, Edgewater, the Design District, and the MiMo District,” Toal says.

But right now, the Fifteen Group has no set plans for any of these sites. “I think the beauty of this market is that it continues to evolve and define itself,” Toal beams. “There are so many exciting possibilities that we’re letting the market come to us a little bit.”

Interesting things may be afoot just across the street from the INS building, too.

On March 26, the Biscayne Plaza shopping center was sold by developers Allan Greenwald and Edward Easton. At press time, Greenwald and Easton had not revealed the identity of the buyer or the sale price, except to say that included in the deal were several acres of land fronting the Little River.



Newest tenant at Biscayne Plaza is dd's Discounts, a subsidiary of Ross Dress for Less.

Greenwald and Easton have owned the shopping center since 1983. It was built in 1954 on what had been a strawberry farm, and enjoyed great popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. In more recent years, however, the center’s business and office spaces have been largely vacant, tempting some visionaries to imagine a high-rise, mixed-use community in its place. In fact plans for 2470 housing units and 200,000 square feet of retail were submitted to the city in 2005, though nothing materialized (see the *BT*’s “At the Corner of Yesterday and Tomorrow,” June 2010).

The old INS building across from Biscayne Plaza has its own storied past. Completed in 1962, its first occupant was the Gulf American Corporation, a boiler-room operation that specialized in selling Florida swampland to naive Americans and foreigners who dreamed

of building their vacation homes in the Sunshine State.

In an attempt to build Golden Gates Estates on thousands of acres of land near the Everglades in Collier County, Gulf American drained wetlands, paved roads, and burned tens of thousands of oaks, pines, and cypress trees. Only a few homes were built in the 1970s, and environmentalists blamed the canals that Gulf American Corporation had dug (without permits) for the wetlands’ loss of billions of gallons of freshwater.

A satellite office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service operated in the building beginning in 1979. Then, after outgrowing its old Miami office at 155 S. Miami Avenue, the INS made the 79th Street building its new headquarters in May 1983. The federal agency, now known as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration

BT photos by Erik Bojnansky

Services, remained there for the next 25 years, until the fall of 2008. The CIS now resides in three offices west of I-95 located in Kendall, Hialeah, and Liberty City.

Following the agency’s departure, the prospect of re-purposing the 79th Street building captured the imagination of college students. In 2010 three students from Florida Atlantic University’s School of Urban & Regional Planning proposed turning it into a MiMo Arts Center consisting of a museum dedicated to the post-World War II architectural style, classrooms, community rooms, offices, and ground-level restaurants and retail. Also in 2010, a team of Barry University business students suggested turning the building into an indoor sporting venue with each floor dedicated to sports like bowling, swimming, indoor soccer, and more. (For more on the “sports haven scenario,” see the *BT*’s “Five Big Ideas for the MiMo District,” April 2010.)

Jeff Morr, CEO of Majestic Properties, thinks the old INS building could easily be reused as an office building, although if he were the developer, he’d convert it to a residential building. “You could have loft-style apartments and high ceilings,” he says, making a comparison to The Bank, a mixed-use loft project in a former bank building near to Biscayne Plaza at 8101 Biscayne Blvd.

Or the former INS headquarters could be knocked down. Says the Fifteen Group’s Justin Toal: “We’re not committed to keeping it, and we’re not committed to destroying it. We’re trying to identify the best use of the property.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Active Design

Continued from page 54

classroom: Extra-wide upstairs hallways have small “break-out” alcoves with tables and chairs, so students can work together in groups or study on their own.

Coding constraints meant the main, open staircase could only service the first four of the building’s seven levels, so it was decided the building’s enclosed fire stairs would take over for the last three levels. To meet the Active Design guidelines, these fire stairs have windows offering rooftop views and glimpses of cruise ships at the Port of Miami. Signage encourages users to continue on the stairs all the way to the fitness center at the top level.



Broad hallways have small “break-out” alcoves with tables and chairs, so students can work together.

Some changes were made to plans at the request of the college. Exterior spaces created by the building’s

undulating façade, originally planned as balconies, were later modified to become inaccessible, roofed areas, and a

proposed running track on the building’s roof did not meet budget requirements.

Looking to the future, Miami is joining progressive cities across the nation growing their transportation choices. A bike-share program — following on Miami Beach’s successful program (two million rentals in not quite two years) — and an increase in pedestrian investments will help to implement some of the basics of Active Design.

AIA Miami is working with partners to create the first “FIT City Miami Forum” later this year, with a full day of programming that it hopes will raise the visibility of Active Design practices here. See centerforactivedesign.org/conferences.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

Rising to the Occasion

Global warming, and its impact on sea levels, needs to be addressed locally

By **Frank Rollason**
BT Contributor

So the other night I'm watching a documentary on Alaskan polar bears on the Smithsonian channel. (I have no life, it's true.) In this riveting presentation, it was made clear the ice floes that serve as floating islands for polar bears as they make their way from frozen sea cap to frozen sea cap in search of food (seals) are becoming scarcer.

Many of the bears drown from exhaustion because they just cannot tread the cold sea any longer. And why, you may ask, are the ice floes becoming scarcer?

Global warming.

I know, I know. Some of you may think I have jumped on the Al Gore bandwagon and am pushing all kinds of panic buttons, but this is just not the case. What has me following the global-warming situation is the resulting rise in sea level and the impact it will eventually have on the East Coast and, in particular, on South Florida.

Speaking of panic, it will only become a panic situation if our elected officials ignore the rising tides and just kick the can down the road as an issue to be handled by the next set of elected officials. (That happened with our national debt and you see how well that's going.)

Anyway, back to the animals that serve as a barometer of climatic

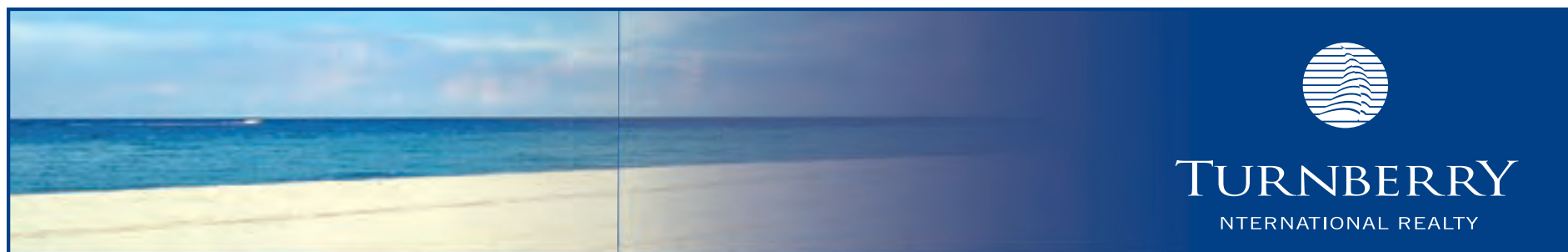


Video still courtesy RED Studios Digital Imagery and Animation

conditions, much like the proverbial canary in the coal mine. In the case of global warming, other animals are silently sounding the alert.

The polar bear population is decreasing primarily due to a lack of food. Climate change is having an impact on the food chain, and the coldest regions of our big blue marble are the most sensitive to the changes.

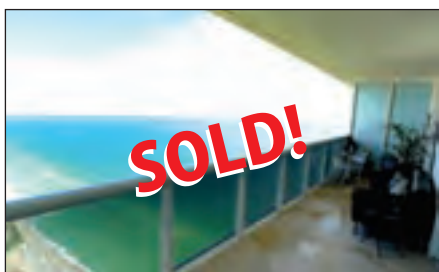
While the polar bears are located to the north in the Arctic, penguins are located in the southern region of Antarctica. On March 11, NBC had a segment on the nightly news concerning the plight of the penguins. Apparently, over relatively recent geological periods, there has been a ten-degree temperature rise in this region. The results have been



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catastrophic for the penguin population, so much so that their numbers have dropped by more than 90 percent. Why?

Global warming.

You see, as the temperature rises, the amount of algae growing under the ice cap dwindles, resulting in an adverse impact on the next organism in the food chain, krill. At this point there is 80 percent less krill than there was when the climate was much colder. Well, who eats krill, aside from small fish eaten by larger fish, which are then eaten by penguins? Only the largest mammal left in the sea: the whale.

During the cold season, the whales migrate to the poles and feed upon krill to gain fat in order to survive the long migration back to warmer climates, where they bear and raise their young, before once again heading back to the colder waters to pig out on krill. It appears that the pigging-out times are quickly ending. Warmer climate equals fewer algae; fewer algae equals fewer krill; fewer krill equals fewer fish; fewer fish equals fewer penguins and whales.

Let's bring this subject a little closer to home. On March 10, the front page

of the *Miami Herald* featured an article headlined "Deep Trouble," which began: "A lot of highly developed coastal property could be under water sooner than you think." (Editor's note: For a comprehensive look at how sea-level rise will affect the Biscayne Corridor, see *BT* senior writer Erik Bojnansky's cover story "Lost in a Rising Sea," September 2012.)

The *Herald* article's primary focus was a federal lawsuit filed by an advocacy group called Biscayne Bay Waterkeeper, challenging Miami-Dade's \$1.5 billion plan to repair the county's aging sewage system. The crux of the suit is that the county is ignoring the inevitable sea rise as it spends millions of taxpayer dollars to retrofit and repair the three main sewage plants, located in South Dade, North Miami, and on Virginia Key.

The county argues the current work will buy several decades of time and, anyway, it doesn't have the funding to accomplish longer-range work. The position of several scientists studying the sea-level issue is that it's apparent sea rise is proceeding at a rate faster than what had been anticipated even four short years ago.

Here are a few stats that should make you start thinking: Between 2031 and 2042 (18-29 years from now) a one-foot rise is expected. Between 2048 and 2066 (35-53 years), a two-foot rise is expected. Between 2063 and 2085 (50-72 years), a three-foot rise is expected. Between 2094 and 2112 (just 99 years), a six-foot rise is expected.

So what do we do? Well, there is a consortium of engineers, scientists, and other professionals from Palm Beach County to Monroe County studying the issue and formulating a plan. Just as President John F. Kennedy made a moon landing a top national priority in the 1960s, so too must President Obama make it a national priority to address catastrophic sea-level rise, which is clearly on the way.

In the January 2013 issue of *Rolling Stone*, writer Jeff Goodell pointed out that, "among all the tests President Obama faced in his first term, his biggest failure was climate change." After promising in 2008 that his presidency would be "the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal," President Obama

went silent on the most crucial issue of our time.

If one subscribes to the bumper sticker philosophy, "Think Globally, Act Locally," I submit it's time for some heat to be turned up under the butts of our locally elected officials. While it may be of some value to shoot off an e-mail to the president, it may be of more value to start asking our local elected officials and state reps what they are doing to bring a relevant action plan into being.

After all, it will be a waste of time — and money — to rebuild a crumbling national infrastructure of bridges, roads, and water and sewer systems if it will all be under water by the time our children's children are middle age.

I will leave you with a quote from Dr. Harold Wanless, a University of Miami geology professor who has studied sea-level rise in South Florida for the past 40 years: "At some point, and I hope it's this year, Miami-Dade government and everybody has to start truly recognizing that we're in for it; that this is coming." Couldn't have said it better myself.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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And the Beats Go On

Once again, the Ultra Music Festival brings big money — and big headaches — to downtown Miami

By **Adam Schachner**
BT Contributor

The downtown streets were overrun with shocking Day-Glo yellow, green, and orange masses. Flamboyant youth descended on Miami in droves. The unusually brisk mid-March nights did not discourage the faithful from wearing minimalist getups; there would be plenty of body heat where they were going. Ground-shaking bass beats pounded from stages at Bayfront Park, invading eardrums throughout downtown.

Ultra Music Festival had returned.

Ultra's annual extravaganza represents both a celebration and a burden for Miami. Debate precedes its yearly arrival, and its continued contract with the city. Arguments bounce back and forth like so many dancing concert goers. Advocates for the

festival see profit, tourism, and cultural recognition. Those who don't roll with that rhythm see a messy drain on resources, traffic nightmares, and a lot of noise reverberating off the downtown skyline.

Add to the mix this year's expanded menu of Ultra festivities — two weekends, instead of one — and the obstacles to finding common ground are compounded.

The conflict extends to city government, as the virtues and frustrations associated with the festival are discussed among elected officials. William Plasencia, a senior staffer for Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose District 2 includes Bayfront Park, affirms his boss's position, offering that "the commissioner has gone on the record opposing the second weekend. There's too much pressure on the area."

Yet the possibility that Ultra is doing more and more things right every year



BT photo by Adam Schachner

is also noted by Plasencia: "We've heard from residents that it is greatly improved from last year, particularly the traffic."

Certainly the revenue from the event is enough to buy it some reconsideration. As of this year's first weekend, Plasencia says, the event brought in "hundreds of thousands of dollars for overtime pay. That was bigger than we heard back in October, when the second weekend was approved."

The event's financial benefits are undeniable. "The thing that people fail to recognize," asserts Tim Schmand, Bayfront Park's executive director, "is that

Bayfront receives no government funding. Events like Ultra or the [Mercedes-Benz] Corporate Run allow us to fund our programming. You can't run a park on bake sales."

Last year Ultra netted Bayfront Park \$455,000 over one weekend. Schmand predicts the added weekend this year will more than double park revenue. Ultra also brings jobs downtown. "Cleaning cost for the crew is \$298,708. Solid waste is \$33,000," Schmand informs. "And that is all paid for by Ultra Music Festival. The crews are over 100 local workers."



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While Ultra offers the trappings of a jet-set lifestyle more typically associated with Ibiza or Sao Paulo, it also carries club culture's stigmas. Attendees are criticized as wild or morally ambiguous. Yearly rumors that the latest designer drugs will be readily available terrify the parents of ravers waiting to flock to the event.

The festival draws a specific crowd and their loosened wallets, but the attraction extends far beyond Bayfront's Klipsch Amphitheater. Amid the behavioral tumult, downtown residents coexist with flashing light displays and the insistent *duntz-duntz-duntz* of drums and bass.

During the festival's first weekend, the parade of ticket-holders stretched beyond downtown; noisily colorful groups lined the streets close to Bayfront. The distinct — some would say negative — impact Ultra had on the city's functioning became apparent.

Miami's very layout was forced to change in order to accommodate Ultra's monumental crowds. Police transformed Biscayne Boulevard into a circuit crossing. Fencing and partitions corralled partygoers into a winding path off the sidewalk and into the street, barriers separating pedestrians from cars.

Northbound traffic was rerouted into southbound lanes. Cars navigated around hordes of glowing participants who traveled by Metrorail and Metromover (an exponential boost to transit ridership). Meanwhile, most of Bayfront Park was inaccessible during the weeklong break between shows.

These alterations embody the duality of Ultra's influence. While the city's routine was altered, many of these disruptions provided substantial income. Downtown shops filled with fluorescent-garbed celebrants. Music tourists crammed hotels. Service staffs logged overtime.

According to an often cited study conducted by Coral Gables-based business consultants the Washington Economic Group, Ultra brings the city roughly \$79 million every concert series. Each year brings in about 900 jobs related to the event. This year those numbers no doubt will increase, owing to the extra weekend of activity. Love it or hate it, the city is dancing to Ultra's tune, and seems to be benefiting.

Ultra is rapidly becoming a Miami tradition. The name itself is symbolic: "Ultra" suggests the extensiveness of the

festival's hype and its followers' limitless devotion, yet it also represents the sizable revenue produced during the festivities. Bystanders to this year's phenomenon can attest to its enormity.

Eddie Padilla, executive director of the business and promotion collaborative Downtown Miami Partnership, recognizes the opportunities for increased profits represented by this year's festival. Beyond the ticket sales, there are incentives for festivalgoers to stick around throughout the week. "[Attendees] are going to restaurants and businesses downtown," says Padilla. "Initially, the Partnership didn't look at the crossover between two weekends. Now, it is definitely a positive impact."

The economic boost is welcome, but, as Padilla notes, there is also a community to consider. Downtown residents previously have voiced their concerns over noise, the need for increased law enforcement, and excessive trash. "The residents have had some impacts," Padilla acknowledges. "We are trying to address those. So we're working with police, the city, and the [Ultra] organization to make sure that cleanup efforts are sufficient."

The Downtown Miami Partnership looks toward next year and beyond. Padilla points out that "it's incumbent upon everyone impacted to voice their opinions — positive and negative — so we can put forth challenges for the upcoming years."

Schmand, for his part, likens Ultra to a Woodstock for today's youth: "Dance music is like folk music for Miami. After disco went mainstream, there was still a following for it on Miami Beach, which was ground zero for dance music in Miami. What Ultra has done is move it out of the clubs and into a larger position."

Looking ahead to another year of Ultra, downtown residents and officials can anticipate conflicts along with the celebration. Ultra may never find unanimous support or an enthusiastic welcome downtown, but the festival will be back.

Concerned residents are therefore left to weigh how a weekend — or two — of inconvenience every year stacks up against the promise of continued funding for one of the city's signature attractions, Bayfront Park.

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Unnatural Disaster

The Biscayne Landing “tsunami” is about to hit — before voters can have a say

By **Mark Sell**
BT Contributor

Surf’s up, and the City of North Miami May 14 election campaign signs are already washing ashore like shells and jellyfish, although filing deadline isn’t until April 8.

But the Biscayne Landing tsunami is getting poised to hit first.

The pressure is on to wrap up the preliminary site plan this month — before the election, while the developers can still deal with a relatively amenable city council. If, say, Carol Keys were to beat Michael Blynn in District 2, and Kevin Burns were to succeed Andre Pierre as mayor, the developers might face a distinctly cooler reception. But there is

no telling who will win in a crowded and still-evolving field of candidates.

As many know, developers Michael Swerdlow, Richard LeFrak, and Oleta Partners LLC stormed the beaches last August and handed the City of North Miami \$17.5 million-plus, saving the municipality from fiscal crisis so they could go to work on a 20-year epic project to develop 184 acres on the southeast corner of 151st Street and Biscayne Boulevard.

That project has morphed into a retail, residential, and auto mall Godzilla (with adult-care facilities now back in the picture), and crews have begun filling the lakes and preparing for the spine road that will link 143rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard with 151st Street. (An additional elevated road over wetlands linking Biscayne Landing



Kobi Karp Architecture

The Biscayne Landing plan as of March 27, with adult-care facilities and car dealerships at the northern end (left-hand side of map).

with Florida International University remains just talk, for now.)

Oleta Partners met sharp resistance March 5 at the planning and zoning commission meeting, which declared their development plan an abomination, with spirited support from council candidate Keys, activist Carol Prager, and mayoral candidate Burns.

On March 12, planning and zoning commission member William Prevatel, an architect and urban planner (and the

one who dubbed Biscayne Landing “the tsunami”), fought a bad cold and came before the North Miami City Council at midnight like the Masque of the Red Death, saying of the project: “This is insane, and you’re all going to pay for it.”

Biscayne Landing project manager Herb Tillman, ever the gentleman, kept his cool and announced a March 19 community workshop at the sales center at 151st and Biscayne, with an April 30

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deadline for the final master plan.

The planners, the Kobi Karp architectural firm, hot-footed it and came back with a better received, new master plan at the March 19 workshop — where Swerdlow stressed the plan is conceptual at best, with precise site-plan approval some time away. The next planning and zoning meeting is scheduled for April 2 (almost certainly before you read this, but if you care about what’s happening, get informed and go to any remaining workshops).

Plans now call for 4390 residential units (not 3400 as earlier reported; master plans are elastic, you see), mostly rentals. That requires 8680 parking spaces, give or take. With David Lawrence K-8 at 140-percent capacity, where does that leave us? What’s the infrastructure plan for schools, including Alonzo and Tracy Mourning High School? Services? Traffic?

(As of March 19, there’s a 7.2-acre active park in the southwest corner, by Highland Village in North Miami Beach, but some residents are pressuring the architects and planners to put it closer to 151st Street and the school corridor.)

What is in the plan are massive high-rise buildings, and some appear

as tall as the 25-story Oaks Towers, which, incidentally, won’t be getting any of the promised \$2 million in help for amenities from Michael Swerdlow, who dropped the whole idea last year when Oleta Partners’ deal to buy 160 of the towers’ lender-owned units fell apart.

The master plan is still very much in play, and the pressure is on to get the current city council to vote on it at two readings, scheduled for April 9 and April 23, with, let’s hope, another public workshop or two in there somewhere.

The March 5 plan, now undergoing perpetual tweaking, includes 150 hotel rooms — for the Cherubin brothers, Haitian-American broadcasters/entrepreneurs and partners with Swerdlow and LeFrak in Oleta — 750,000 square feet of retail, 9880 square feet of restaurants, and 202,760 square feet of auto malls (four dealerships, as planned).

But first, some representative comments from the March 5 planning meeting:

Carol Keys: “Those buildings look like tenements in New York City. ... It is just an abomination — those high-rises in the middle of that proposal.”

Community activist Prager: “You’re paving over paradise. This is just a

bunch of crap.”

Mayoral candidate (and former North Miami mayor) Burns: “I am so disappointed and saddened and frustrated that a plan of this childish nature would even make it before the planning commission.”

Planning commissioner and former North Miami Police Chief Kenny Each: “Beautiful condos are going up in Sunny Isles...but I see dumps going up here.”

Chairman Kevin Seifried, who has served on planning and zoning for 23 years: “This is just greed personified.... This is terrible.... This fits a community standard maybe for the post-World War II era, maybe for the 1950s. I cannot see this meeting community standards for the first quarter of the 21st Century. I do not see the vision. The greed, yes; the profit, yes. I don’t see the vision.”

Finally, let’s go back to Prevatel, who, like other planning commissioners, would strongly prefer a more upscale project, and asked rhetorically: “Would you like to live in a place like this?”

“This is a hellscape,” Prevatel told the North Miami City Council on March 12. “It caters to the lowest common denominator. People who cannot afford

to live elsewhere are going to be stuck in this place, and once they are in, they will want to get the hell out.... It is an abomination, and I feel very, very alone. You have two options. Do you want to be known as ‘The City of Progress’ or ‘The City of Projects’? You’re not going to do [planning for] 184 acres in two weeks. This is insane.”

All that clearly got Oleta Partners’ attention, and they rejiggered the plan to add more green space and lakes, with a community center area.

Seifried seemed mollified, if not pliant. He patiently suggested more “stacked” retail with a smaller asphalt footprint. Prevatel remained fearful of a preponderance of low-income rentals for families, as opposed to higher-income units for cash-rich empty-nesters.

District 2 Councilman Blynn seemed generally supportive, envisioning a project modeled on LeFrak’s acclaimed Newport project on the Jersey City waterfront.

Whatever the case, Oleta Partners is in a hurry, and the plans are changing almost by the minute. It’s time to pay attention.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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How Well Do You Know Your Neighbors?

Illegal squatters are moving into the Shores, and we're all paying the price

By Jen Karetnick
BT Contributor

Ever wonder how outsiders view Miami in general, and places like Miami Shores, in particular? If so, feel free to read the recently posted travel article in the *New York Times*, titled "Miami, My Way."

Written by a woman who claims to be an expert on "classic, uncool" Miami simply because she's visited nine times over the past two decades, the wrongheaded piece is angering residents across the board.

For one thing, the writer got some facts wrong. She calls the region "southern Florida," rather than the widely accepted South Florida. She misspells

a restaurant's name. She cites a Kmart on Lincoln Road in 1991, instead of the Woolworth's that it actually was, and has no idea the city limits don't include Homestead and the Keys, which are part of "her" Miami.

For another, the tone of the piece is Manhattan-centric condescension, as though Miami is just another borough of New York City. She agrees with a friend (whom she calls "a veteran of Art Basel") that "most of the allegedly cool stuff in Miami is actually stuff for New Yorkers who go there — it doesn't have to do with Miami."

She claims that trying out a "list of Manhattan-chef-recommended new restaurants" is useless because "in my



opinion, if you're going to Miami for food that is more exotic than crab claws and Key lime pie, you are probably overthinking it." Ouch.

But what really infuriates me, and a whole bunch of other locals, is this: She describes Coral Gables, a neighborhood of multimillion-dollar homes, as "lushly decayed."

I'm sure the residents of Coral Gables are insulted to hear that their stringently monitored city is actually

"decayed." But hey, she didn't describe Miami Shores that way. Why should we be concerned?

Like Miami Shores — the Village Beautiful to the Gables' City Beautiful — homeowners in the Gables pay some of the highest property taxes in Miami-Dade County. Published, misguided statements not only harm the Gables, they hurt equivalent communities that banks, mortgage brokers, and real estate agents compare to the Gables. Just try to sell your house

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An advertisement for MOCA's Creative Careers program. The top half features a photograph of a young man and woman; the woman is holding a camera to her eye. Below the photo are two red banners with white text: 'BE CREATIVE' and 'VISIT MOCA!'. The bottom half of the ad is white with black text. It includes the MOCA logo (Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami), the text 'BE CREATIVE AT MOCA! LEARN ABOUT FAMILY & FREE TEEN PROGRAMS AVAILABLE.', and 'CREATIVE CAREERS!' in large, bold letters. At the bottom, it lists the address '770 NE 125th Street, North Miami, Florida 33161', the website 'www.mocanomi.org', and the Knight Foundation logo with the text 'ADULT, TEEN & FAMILY PROGRAMS ALSO AVAILABLE' and 'MOCA Art Institute Free Teen Programs are made possible by:'.

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or renegotiate your mortgage with “lushly decayed” hanging over your roof.

What else harms our homes’ values, especially in Miami Shores? Foreclosures. Houses abandoned by their owners and left to the banks, who don’t monitor them until something goes wrong. And in both the Gables and the Shores, as well as all over the Upper Eastside and in similar neighborhoods in Broward and Palm Beach counties, what goes wrong is that squatters move in.

Between 2012 and 2013, the phenomenon of people moving into a house they don’t own or have a valid lease to rent has become more prevalent. Several factors contribute: the poor economy, causing families to squat out of necessity; unscrupulous criminals posing as landlords; and drug rings looking to establish dens that fly under the radar.

I’d like to muster up some sympathy for well-intentioned squatters like my husband and I when we bought Mango House. We had no choice but to move in early, after the seller declared bankruptcy. But it seems ill-intentioned squatters are the more dominant kind.

Indeed, this past July, NBC 6 reporter Willard Shepard helped to bust

squatters living illegally on NW 100th Street; he was told by Miami Shores Police Chief Kevin Lystad that similar situations are occurring “at four homes in the same neighborhood.”

Shepard’s next piece? It could very well be on the alleged squatters who last month moved into a foreclosed home, left vacant for the past year, on NE 92nd Street.

The loudly barking Afghan hound that used to patrol the property was effective at keeping away strangers, but the family moved out of state and, of course, took the dog with them. The lack of defenses, plus the public availability of foreclosure records, made the home vulnerable.

Fortunately, observant neighbors noted the flurry of activity, and one proactive homeowner wrote about it in a letter he distributed to everyone in the area. “Two individuals were observed breaking into and entering the property,” he wrote. “Neighbors...have since observed these same two individuals having the locks changed on the property, moving furnishings, and establishing utility service on the premises...and what appear to be drug-related transactions occurring on the property.”

I’m impressed with the vigilance of my neighbors, who called police and the broker on the property, who has power of attorney. While the police can’t do much except try to catch the men committing criminal acts, the broker can start eviction proceedings.

The reason why police are somewhat helpless in these matters has to do with an archaic “adverse possession” law, which was put on the books centuries ago to help farmers, working land they didn’t own, claim it after seven years. It’s kind of like a common-law marriage, except between squatter and house. Many are taking advantage of this law, though a bill has recently been filed to overturn it.

Only the owner of the house, the one holding the deed — or the bank — has the power to prove trespassing, thus enabling the police to make an arrest. But neighbors can be surprisingly effective. The first step is alerting the homeowners and the police, at least so they can monitor the property. Also notify your Neighborhood Watch group, if you have one.

The second step is bringing the situation to widespread attention. While it may seem counterintuitive to let the general public know about houses in

foreclosure — and thus expose the properties to potential problems, and your own home to falling values — it’s important to focus the lens on those houses that are already illegally occupied in order to stem the tide of squatters.

The third step? Make city officials aware. Squatters tend not to care about the house itself — maintaining its appearance or keeping it up to code — so in that regard it’s effective for officials to file violations. While it might hurt the actual homeowner in the long run — liens can affect the sale of a house — if the house is in foreclosure already, the bank will pay the fines.

For examples, see the March minutes of the Miami Shores Code Board meeting; it’s very instructive not only in terms of the damage the squatters can do to a home, but how many Miami Shores properties are currently in code violation. If you’re trying to negotiate a mortgage, this is important information.

Paying attention is, quite simply, the best way to keep Miami Shores from being overrun by squatters, or classified by ignorant outsiders as “lushly decayed.”

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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Someone Else's Problem

Miami Lakes addresses the financial exploitation of seniors, something Aventura should have done long ago

By **Jay Beskin**
BT Contributor

The Town of Miami Lakes was incorporated five years after Aventura. Because the founders of both Miami Lakes and Aventura used the same law firm to draw up their charters, Miami Lakes's form of government differs little from ours. Yet, Miami Lakes officials have taken a path that is much different.

While Aventura officials dismiss the need for resident input on most matters, Miami Lakes has at least eight citizen advisory committees, some concerning the special requirements or interests of its residents. For example, there is a Youth

Activities Task Force, a Veterans Committee, and an Elderly Affairs Committee.

A recent initiative of the Elderly Affairs Committee proves how citizen participation can have a positive impact on a community. Last month the committee held a seminar addressing the financial exploitation of seniors. According to the 2010 census, about 13.3 percent of Miami Lakes's population is 65 years of age or older. Aventura has twice that proportion of seniors, 26.6 percent.

This correspondent is personally aware of four instances of financial exploitation of seniors that have occurred in or near Aventura. It's a silent menace, because all too often family members or friends do not know how to respond,



or are too embarrassed to publicize the experience. But we should be thankful the people of Miami Lakes had the wherewithal to address what is also an Aventura story.

This is how the story frequently unfolds. A senior lives alone. Her children or other family members live out of town and visit the senior only occasionally.

While still having full mental competence, the senior requires some day-to-day assistance with physical tasks, and

she or her family hires an aide, who may work part-time or full-time. The aide assists the senior in bathing and dressing, prepares meals, cleans the condo, does the shopping, and drives the senior to medical appointments. The senior pays the aide an hourly rate. So far, so good.

Several years pass. The senior has become a bit more physically frail. She rarely leaves the condo, except for trips to the doctor and, once in while, to a restaurant with the aide. Mentally she's not



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as sharp as before. The only person the senior sees on a regular basis is the aide.

The aide becomes the senior's best friend. Suddenly, the aide is paid two or three times her original wage. The senior writes checks for a down payment on a new vehicle for the aide. The senior also pays the monthly car payments. (After all, the aide has to have reliable transportation.)

More checks are written for the aide's household purchases, maybe even for a down payment on a new house. After a time the senior is unable to write checks. So the aide writes them, and the senior signs them without question.

You can easily guess how this story ends. One of the senior's children visits, reviews the bank accounts, and, to his horror, realizes his mother may not have enough money on which to live out her years, particularly if, at some point, she is going to require admittance to a care facility.

If the senior didn't sign appropriate estate documents when she was fully competent, legal guardianship proceedings have to be initiated to obtain control of the senior's accounts. The guardianship proceeding is expensive,

embarrassing, and intrusive. Four strangers — a court-appointed lawyer and three healthcare professionals — have to visit the senior to evaluate whether she retains her mental competence.

Of course, there are variations on this story. Sometimes a child is taking care of her mother's affairs and writing checks out of a joint account or under power of attorney. That child, or her partner, has encountered financial difficulties. Checks are written to satisfy the child's debts.

That's what the mother would have done under the circumstances, if only she could fully grasp them, right? The other children get wind of this. Lawyers are hired, nasty letters are written, and lawsuits are filed.

So how do the good people of Miami Lakes tell us to prevent this problem? By having seniors adopt a set of carefully drawn estate planning documents while they are fully competent and clearly able to state their intentions, in the event they later become incapacitated.

First, a senior should execute a power of attorney, which enables a trusted person to deal with her financial

matters in the event she no longer wishes, or is competent, to do so.

Beware, though. The power of attorney is an extremely powerful document. In certain cases, the agent appointed under the power of attorney can change the senior's estate plan, and in all cases the agent can act on behalf of the senior by writing checks or rearranging investments, even when the senior is fully competent and wants to continue to manage her own affairs.

Accordingly, it's important the appointed agent and/or her partner have no personal financial issues or a substance-abuse problem.

If the senior wishes to appoint one child to the exclusion of others, there should be no actual or potential conflict among the children, so that the children not acting as the agent have no reason to question the actions of the agent. Also the agent should have some experience in handling financial investments.

Second, the senior should create a living trust to which most, if not all, of her assets are transferred. A living trust is a document under which the senior is the sole beneficiary during her lifetime and

remains in control of the assets so long as she remains competent. Thus there is no danger that anyone can take over her financial affairs until she is incompetent.

The senior can use the assets in the trust for any purpose. However, if the senior is no longer able to handle her affairs, no mortifying guardianship proceeding is required. Instead, a letter from a doctor who knows her well — and perhaps one from another physician, such as a psychiatrist — should be sufficient to transfer powers to a successor trustee.

The same rules in selecting an agent under a power of attorney should apply in selecting a successor trustee. If a qualified individual is not available, then a trust company may be a good choice. These are particularly experienced in saying no to friends and relatives who may want to "borrow" money from the senior.

If the approximately 9000 Aventura seniors take this advice from the people of Miami Lakes, there will be no Aventura story to tell anymore. The people of Aventura should thank the people of Miami Lakes.

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by Derek



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Culture Lab

After 15 years, experimental art space Locust Projects is still pushing boundaries, and producing intriguing results

By Anne Tschida
BT Arts Editor

During Art Basel Miami Beach this past December, Chicago-based rising art star Theaster Gates hung out at the nonprofit Locust Projects in the Design District for a week or so, making his *Soul Manufacturing Corporation*.

That exhibit was an experiment in craft creation: Gates and several companions he called “skilled workers” made ceramics and woodworks and discussed the value of labor, the nature of urban interventions, and the evolution of race relations with anyone who passed by. It was hugely popular.

Meanwhile, at the main Basel fair in the convention center on Miami Beach, Gates’s work was prominently displayed in the booths of his Chicago and London galleries.

Gates and his “Soul” landed at a perfect time, providing an appropriate birthday present. Just as Locust Projects was gearing up for its 15th anniversary, the exhibit was a great example of what Locust has brought to the arts community, and what it promises to continue to bring.

Its mission from inception was to give space to noncommercial, experimental art, to artists both local and national who really would have no other place to play with some of their

alternative concepts, and then serve up that work to the public.

What we have seen from Locust is worth looking back on, as a number of its exhibitions were crucial to Miami’s artistic development.

In 1998, long before Basel arrived and before Wynwood was even a whisper in the cultural world, three artists decided Miami’s fledgling art scene needed a space where art could be shown without necessarily being sold. At the time, the galleries that mattered most were in Coral Gables, but Elizabeth Withstandley, Westen Charles, and the artist known as COOPER found a cheap, abandoned warehouse on NW 23rd Street in Wynwood.

“It was pretty scary,” says Charles, recalling the neighborhood. The windows in the place were blown out and “water was leaking everywhere” in the building. They fixed it up.

But because nobody knew what Locust was, the trio couldn’t find artists to show. The first exhibit was a compilation of their own work. That soon changed. As the three artists had gone to school in the Northeast, they brought down some New York artists, and an audience began to trickle in. “We didn’t have a lot of expectations back then,” says Charles. “We just wanted it to be artist-friendly.”

As he remembers it, in those early days, people came to exhibits and



Photos courtesy of Locust Projects

The current installation at Locust Projects is *Drawn from the Everglades*, by Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen Nguyen.



Gallery director Chana Budgazad Sheldon with Dennis Scholl.

stayed all night. (There was no other place to go in the neighborhood.) Artists, art lovers, gallery owners, and collectors took notice of the unique crowd

and work that was materializing. Some of the installations blew people away, others left them scratching their heads. That’s the nature of experimental: If

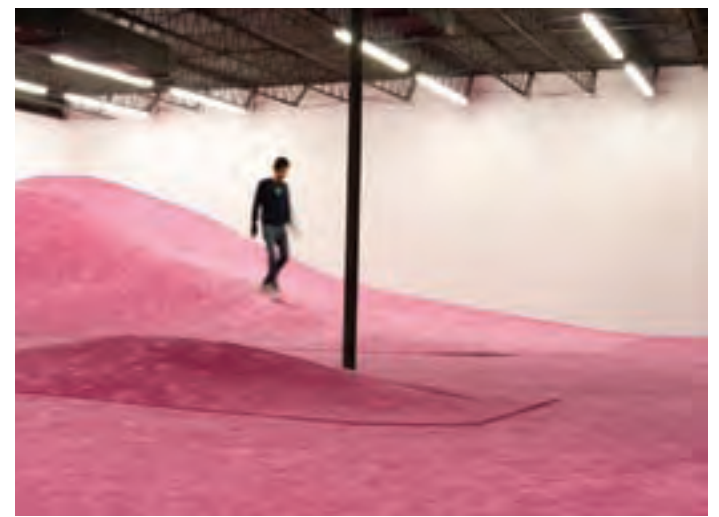
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Theaster Gates this past December, working at his *Soul Manufacturing Corporation*.



Valerie Hegarty's 2010 *Breakthrough Miami* turned the gallery into a post-hurricane world.



Miami's Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova created *An Uneven Floor* at Locust in January 2010.

you knew the outcome, it wouldn't be an experiment.

Other galleries popped up in the previously desolate neighborhood and, after Basel picked Miami as its U.S. home, Wynwood took off.

Running Locust became a full-time job, albeit one with no pay. "Basically, we couldn't afford it anymore," says Charles. But with the help of cultural promoters such as Dennis Scholl and Mary Luft, they were able to form a nonprofit art institution in 2002.

While the experience of visiting Locust lost a little bit of its rawness — along with the surrounding neighborhood — the space became a focal point of the local art world. Artists from all over began sending in proposals, and professional directors were needed. In 2006 they got one, Chana Budgazad Sheldon, along with a number of important grants that would keep the organization afloat.

Four years ago this month, Budgazad Sheldon, a veteran of Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York, was hired.

Just as she arrived, she recalls, she was shown the boxes that would be carted off to the new Locust Projects space in the Design District. "My first job was the pleasure of packing up," she says with a laugh. Unlike the patched-up warehouse with the huge metal gate that would be cranked up on opening nights, the new space in the Design District had street-facing windows and a door.

One of the remarkable exhibits that took over the new space came from New York-based Valerie Hegarty, who, using paper, photography, and trompe l'oeil painting, turned the gallery into a vision of a post-hurricane world. There were pastel-colored tiles somewhat intact, a beautiful sea in the background, and birds jumping around what might have been your living room, now destroyed.

Another stunner was the pink-carpeted, undulating floor from local artist Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova. It was an immersive, beautiful piece. Other exhibits were not so successful. But again, taking chances means not everything

is going to work, and why a Locust Projects is needed in any respectable arts town.

The room where Theaster Gates set up his urban corporation is the latest location for Locust. It's still in the Design District, only now on N. Miami Avenue. Occupied in 2012, this is Locust's largest home yet, with room for a library and several exhibition spaces. "The reaction from artists on our new space has been enthusiastic," says Budgazad Sheldon. "They seem to think it is an open, friendly space."

Friendly, but still cutting-edge. Example: the current installation at Locust, from New Yorkers Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen Nguyen. *Drawn from the Everglades* is an amazing trip through nature, and through our own childhood desires to play with it. A giant, all-green paper sculpture covers the massive space. It is a mangrove, or whatever verdant world you grew up with, the one that beckoned you to dive into it and carve out your own little place, back when you were free and young.

And Locust continues to push the envelope in other ways. It has launched a Knight Arts-funded billboard project, highlighting the artwork of both local and international artists on billboards around town, instigated a lecture series with top-notch speakers, and coordinated some art-film nights with O Cinema.

Budgazad Sheldon says all of this is in keeping with Locust's founding mission — to give room to alternative art and also be a place to hang out and talk about it. Adds founding father Charles, who, while not running Locust anymore, remains involved: "Locust Projects was always more an idea — a place for ideas — than a space."

Drawn from the Everglades, by Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen Nguyen, runs through April 26 at Locust Projects, 3852 N. Miami Ave.; 305-576-8570; www.locustprojects.org.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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GALLERIES

101/EXHIBIT

101 NE 40th St., Miami
 305-573-2101
 www.101exhibit.com
 Through April 13:
 "Paintings" by Chase Westfall

ABBA FINE ART

233 NW 36th St., Miami
 305-576-4278
 www.abbafineart.com
 Through April 11:
 "Candyland" by Marco Casentini

ACND GALLERY OF ART

4949 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-751-8367
 www.acnd.net
 Call gallery for exhibition information

ALBERTO LINERO GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 786-286-7355
 www.albertolinerogallery.com
 Through April 4:
 Santiago Betancur Z

ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ FINE ARTS

2630 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-438-0220
 www.alejandravonhartz.net
 Through April 6:
 "Drywood" with Gean Moreno, and Ernesto Oroza

ALMA FINE ART

2242 NW 1st Pl., Miami
 305-576-1150
 www.alfineart.com
 Through April 1:
 "Secrets" by Luis Gonzalez Palma
 April 11 through June 9:
 "Dissolving The Form" by Ariel Toledano?
 "Private Matters" by Julian Pardo and Jesus Petroccini?

ART FUSION

3550 N. Miami Ave., Miami
 305-573-5730
 www.artfusiongallery.com
 April 1 through June 17:
 "Subjects of Splendor" with various artists
Reception April 13, 7 to 11 p.m.

ART NOUVEAU GALLERY

348 NW 29th St., Miami
 305-573-4661
 www.artnouveau.com
 Through April 7:
 "Acordes Cotidianos" by Francisco Bellorin

ART WORK IN PROGRESS

171 NW 36th St., Miami

305-573-4009

www.jacques-harvey.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

ARTSEEN GALLERY

2215 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-237-3597
 http://artseenspace.wordpress.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

ASCASO GALLERY

2441 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-571-9410
 www.ascasogallery.com/site
 Call gallery for exhibition information

BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX

561 NW 32nd St., Miami
 305-576-2828
 www.bacfl.org
 Through April 4:
 "Recently Acquired" with various artists

BAS FISHER INVITATIONAL

122 NE 11th St., Miami
 DWNTWN ArtHouse
 www.basfisherinvitation.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

BLACK SQUARE GALLERY

2248 NW 1st Pl., Miami
 786-999-9735
 www.blacksquaregallery.com
 Through April 9:
 "Monuments" by Kyu-Hak Lee
 April 13 through June 1:
 "Gold Chains and Champagne" by Ryan McCann
Reception April 13, 5 to 9 p.m.

BORINQUEN ART GALLERY

100 NE 38th St., Suite 3, Miami
 305-491-1526
 www.borinquenhealth.org
 Call gallery for exhibition information

BRIDGE RED STUDIOS / PROJECT SPACE

12425 NE 13th Ave. #5, North Miami
 305-978-4856
 www.bridgeredstudios.com
 Through April 7:
 "Reset" by Judith Page, Deborah Schneider, and Ward Shelley

BUZZART

2750 NW 3rd Ave., Suite 6, Miami
 305-571-8100
 www.buzz-art.net

CALDWELL / LINFIELD GALLERY & STUDIO

8351 NE 8th Ct., Miami
 305-754-2093
 www.susannacaldwell.com
 Through June 1:



Kanako Sasaki, *Yellow Leotard*, archival pigment print, 2013, at Dina Mitrani Gallery.

"Mahogany Sculptures and Sculptural Offering Bowls carved from Florida Hardwoods" by Susanna Caldwell

CARIDI GALLERY

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

CAROL JAZZAR CONTEMPORARY ART

158 NW 91st St., Miami Shores
 305-490-6906
 www.cjazzart.com
 By appointment: carol@cjazzart.com
 Through May 5:
 "Reigning Men" by David Rohn

DANIEL AZOULAY GALLERY

Shops at Midtown Miami
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 www.danielazoulaygallery.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

DAVID CASTILLO GALLERY

2234 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 305-573-8110
 www.davidcastillogallery.com
 Through April 6:
 "The Eye, The Vessel, and The Spell" by Pepe Mar
 April 11 through May 4:
 "Far From Apple Hill" by Francie Bishop Good
Reception April 11, 6 to 10 p.m.

DIANA LOWENSTEIN FINE ARTS

2043 N. Miami Ave., Miami
 305-576-1804
 www.dfinearts.com
 April 13 through May 31:
 "The Empire of Light" by Fabiano Parisi and Sterz

DIASPORA VIBE GALLERY

3938 N. Miami Ave., Miami
 786-536-7801
 www.diasporavibe.net
 Call gallery for exhibition information

DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

100 NE 11th St., Miami
 DWNTWN ArtHouse
 305-607-5527
 www.dimensionsvariable.net
 April 11 through May 20:
 Antoine Lefebvre and P. Scott Cunningham
Reception April 11, 7 to 10 p.m.

DINA MITRANI GALLERY

2620 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 786-486-7248
 www.dinamitraniartgallery.com
 April 11 through June 7:
 "Illuminations" by Kanako Sasaki

DOT FIFTYONE ART SPACE

187 NW 27th St., Miami
 305-573-9994
 www.dotfiftyone.com
 Through April 30:

"Tipping Point" by Nina Dotti

ELITE GALLERY

46 NW 36th St., Miami
 754-422-5942
 www.elitefineartgalleries.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

EMERSON DORSCH

151 NW 24th St., Miami
 305-576-1278
 www.emersondorsch.com
 April 12 through May 11:
 "In a Perfect World" by Brookhart Jonquil
 "Relay (Flow)" by Rene Barge

ETRA FINE ART

50 NE 40th St., Miami
 305-438-4383
 www.etrafineart.com
 Call gallery for exhibition information

FREDRIC SNITZER GALLERY

2247 NW 1st Pl., Miami
 305-448-8976
 www.snitzer.com
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GALERIE HELENE LAMARQUE

125 NW 23rd St., Miami
 305-582-6067
 www.galeriehelenehelenelamarque.com
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GALLERY 212 MIAMI CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

2407 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
 516-532-3040
 www.gallery212miami.com
 Through April 13:
 "Art Walks the Runway" with various artists

Culture: GALLERIES + MUSEUMS

GALLERY DIET

174 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-571-2288
www.gallerydiet.com
April 11:
"Timber, lakes" by Nicolas Lobo
Reception April 11, 6 to 9 p.m.

GARY NADER FINE ART

62 NE 27th St., Miami
305-576-0256
www.garynader.com
April 5 through July 30:
"Master's New Acquisitions" with various artists

GENERAL AUDIENCE PRESENTS

769 NE 125th St., North Miami
786-467-0941
www.generalaudiencepresents.com
Through May 4:
"Fun with your new head" by Robert Pruitt

GREGG SHIENBAUM FINE ART

2239 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-456-5478
www.gsfineart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

HARDCORE ARTS CONTEMPORARY SPACE

3326 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-1645
www.hardcoreartmiami.com
Through June 1:
"No Hard Feelings" by Chanoir
"Personal is Political" with Fernando Arias, Milton Becerra, Henry Bermudez, Efen Candelaria, Manuela Covini, Leslie Gabaldon, Mariana Monteagudo, Magnus Sigurdarson, Ruben Torres Llorca

HAROLD GOLEN GALLERY

2294 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-989-3359
www.haroldgolengallery.com
Through April 6:
"Bunny and Betty" with various artists

IDEOBOX ARTSPACE

2417 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-9878
www.ideobox.com
Through April 22:
"Light Begins in Darkness" by Natasha Gray and José Placido Domingo

JUAN RUIZ GALLERY

301 NW 28th St., Miami
786-310-7490
www.juanruizgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

KABE CONTEMPORARY

123 NW 23rd St., Miami
305-573-8142
www.kabecontemporary.com
April 6 through June 15:
"Disassembling Paradise" by Sergio Vega
Reception April 6, 7 to 10 p.m.

KAVACHNINA CONTEMPORARY

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

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

50 NE 29th St., Miami
305-447-3888
www.kelleyroygallery.com
Through April 20:
"Soaring" by Jae Hahn

KIWI GALLERY

48 NW 29th St., Miami
305-200-3047
www.kiwiartsgroup.com
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www.galerieleliamordoch.com
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LOCUST PROJECTS

3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-576-8570
www.locustprojects.org
Through April 26:
"Drawn from the Everglades" by Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen B. Nguyen
"Limonene" by Hannah Whitaker

MARKOWICZ FINE ART

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

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, CENTRE GALLERY

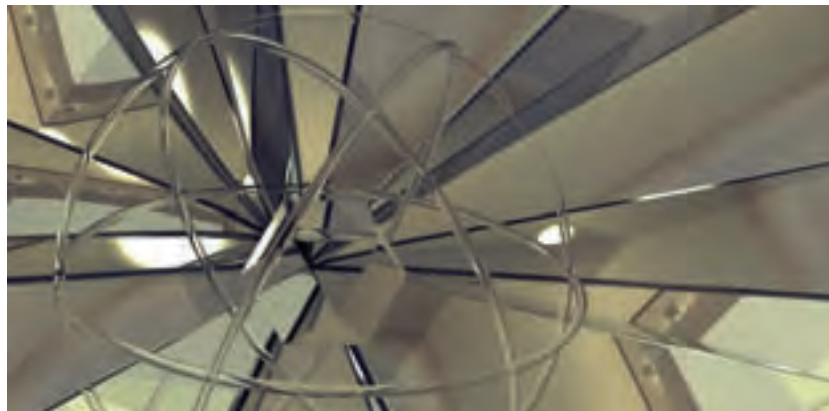
300 NE 2nd Ave., Miami
Bldg. 1, Room 1365
305-237-3696
www.mdc.edu
Call gallery for exhibition information

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART AND DESIGN

Freedom Tower
600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
305-237-7700
www.mdc.edu
Through May 4:
"A Life's Work" by Arnold Mesches
Through May 31:
"Transcending Narratives of Humanity Selected works from the CINTAS Foundation Fellows Collection" with various artists, curated by Natalie Perez

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, GALLERY NORTH

11380 NW 27th Ave., Miami



Brookhart Jonquil, *In a Perfect World*, 3D rendering study, 2013, at Emerson Dorsch.

305-237-1532
www.mdc.edu
Call gallery for exhibition information
MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL GALLERY
1110 SW 104th St., Miami
305-237-2322
www.mdc.edu/kendall
Call gallery for exhibition information

MYRA GALLERIES

177 NW 23rd St., Miami
631-704-3476
www.myragalleries.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

NEW WORLD GALLERY

New World School of the Arts
25 NE 2nd St., Miami
305-2 37-3597
Call gallery for exhibition information

NINA TORRES FINE ART

1800 N. Bayshore Dr., Miami
305-395-3599
www.ninatorresfineart.com
April 1 through 26:
"Poesia Visual Contemporanea" with various artists

NORMAN LIEBMAN STUDIO

2561 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-573-3572
www.norman-liebman-studio.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

NOW CONTEMPORARY ART

175 NW 25th St., Miami
305-571-8181
www.nowcontemporaryart.com
Through April 30:
Carolina Ponte

O. ASCANIO GALLERY

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

www.oascaniogallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information
ONCE ARTS GALLERY
170-C NW 24th St., Miami
786-333-8404
www.oncearts.com
Ongoing:
Pablo Gentile, Jaime Montana, Jaime Apraez, and Patricia Chaparro

OXENBERG FINE ART

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

PAN AMERICAN ART PROJECTS

2450 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-573-2400
www.panamericanart.com
Through April 13:
"There: Postcards from Havana" by

Gustavo Acosta
"Natural Mechanic" by Carlos Gonzalez

PRIMARY PROJECTS

4141 NE 2nd Ave., Suite 104, Miami
www.primaryprojectspace.com
info@primaryflight.com
www.primaryprojectspace.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

PROJECTS GALLERY

250 NW 23rd St., Ste 208, Miami
267-303-9652
www.projectsgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

ROBERT FONTAINE GALLERY

2349 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-397-8530
www.robertfontainegallery.com
April 13 through May 4:
Nick Gentry
Reception April 13, 6 to 9 p.m.

SPINELLO PROJECTS

2930 NW 7th Ave., Miami
786-271-4223
www.spinelloprojects.com
Through April 6:
"LOVE LIKE THE UNIVERSE" by Sinisa Kukec

SWAMPSPACE GALLERY

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

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Culture: GALLERIES + MUSEUMS

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305-978-4437
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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI GALLERY

2750 NW 3rd Ave., Suite 4, Miami
305-284-3161
www.as.miami.edu/art
Call gallery for exhibition information

UNIX FINE ART GALLERY

2219 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-496-0621
www.unixfineart.com
Ongoing: Alexis Torres

WALTMAN ORTEGA FINE ART

2233 NW 2nd Ave., Miami
305-576-5335
www.waltmanortega.com
April 13 through May 31:
"Absolute Zero" by Jonathan Huxley
Reception April 13, 6 to 9 p.m.

WYNWOOD WALLS

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

YEELLEN ART GALLERY

294 NW 54th St., Miami
954-235-4758
www.yeelenart.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

ZADOK GALLERY

2534 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-438-3737
www.zadokgallery.com
Call gallery for exhibition information

MUSEUM & COLLECTION EXHIBITS

ARTCENTER/SOUTH FLORIDA

800 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach
305-674-8278
www.artcentersf.org
Through May 26:
"Multiplicity" with Eugenia Calvo, Babette Herschberger, Regina Jestrow, Laz Ojalde, Kerry Phillips, Frances Trombly, Gerbi Tsesarskaia and Michelle Weinberg

BASS MUSEUM OF ART

2100 Collins Ave., Miami Beach
305-673-7530
www.bassmuseum.org
Through July 21:
"From Picasso to Koons: The Artist as Jeweler" with various artists



Fabiano Parisi, *Il Mondo Che Non Vedo*, archival pigment print, 2013, at Diana Lowestein Fine Arts.

April 12 through August 11:
"Rufus Corporation" by Eve Sussman

CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation)

1018 N. Miami Ave., Miami
305-455-3380
www.cifo.org
April 8 through May 12:
"City Metaphors" by Miquel Navarro

CRAIG ROBBINS COLLECTION

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

DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

23 NE 41st St., Miami
305-576-6112
www.delacruzcollection.org
Ongoing:
"Works from the Collection of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz" with various artists
Ongoing:
Carlos Alfonzo
Through May 11:
"Terra non: Descoperta" by Alfredo Jaar

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FROST ART MUSEUM

10975 SW 17th St., Miami
305-348-2890
thefrost.fiu.edu
Through April 7:
"The Healing Spirits of Water" with various artists
Through April 14:
"Race and Visual Culture under National Socialism" with various artists
Through May 19:
"The Seminole Paintings" by Eugene Savage
Through May 20:
"American Sculpture in the Tropics" with John Henry, Albert Paley, Dennis Oppenheim, Chakaia Booker, and Verina Baxter
Through June 23:
"Concealed Spaces" by José Manuel Ballester
Through December 31:
"Deep Blue" by Javier Velasco

LEGAL ART

1035 N. Miami Ave., Suite 200, Miami
www.legalartmiami.org
Call gallery for exhibition information

LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables
305-284-3535
www.lowemuseum.org
Through April 21:
"Adapting and Adopting: Waves of Change as East

Encounters West, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Art" with various artists
Through February 9:
"Terrestrial Paradises: Imagery from The Voyages of Captain James Cook" with various artists

MIAMI ART MUSEUM

101 W. Flagler St., Miami
305-375-3000
www.miamiartmuseum.org
Ongoing:
"Between Here and There: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection" Through May 12:
"New Work Miami 2013" with various artists, curated by Rene Morales and Diana Nawi
Through June 2:
"Frames of Reference: Latin American Art from the Jorge M. Perez Collection" with various artists

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

770 NE 125th St., North Miami
305-893-6211
www.mocanomi.org
Through May 5:
"Pivot Points: 15 Years and Counting" with various artists

THE MARGULIES

COLLECTION

591 NW 27th St., Miami
305-576-1051
www.margulieswarehouse.com
Through April 28:
Anselm Kiefer, Richard Long, William Tucker, Simryn Gill, Doug Aitken, David Ellis, Roberto Lange, Kader Attia, Nathalie Djurberg, Leandro Erlich, Sabelo Mlangeni, Barbara Probst, and Wael Shawky, curated by Katherine Hinds

THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION

95 NW 29th St., Miami
305-573-6090
http://rfc.museum
Through August 2: "Alone Together" with various artists

VIZCAYA MUSEUM AND GARDEN

3251 S. Miami Ave., Miami
305-250-9133
www.vizcayamuseum.org
Call gallery for exhibition information

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What Rhymes With Cool?

O, Miami is a unique poetry experiment, one that might have flown under your radar the past couple years. This year, don't let it. During the month of April, artists, actors, and, yes, *poets* get together to deliver poetry in the most public of ways. In the past, poems were dropped from planes or sewn into clothing at Goodwill. This year there will be a poetry parade on South Beach. Among the poets featured will be Richard Blanco, who delivered such a powerful work at the presidential inauguration, but there are tons of other highlights. Go to www.omiami.org.

Still Tempting After All These Years

Oh, what a temptress can do. While the idea of a fiery gypsy woman bringing men down is a little politically incorrect these days, *Carmen*, from Georges Bizet, remains one of the most memorable operas of all time. On **Saturday, April 6, and Sunday, April 7** — at 8:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., respectively — the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts (174 E. Flagler St.) will host the Miami Lyric Opera's version of this classic. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45. Go to www.gusmancenter.org.

A Night of Heavenly Music

It's not all that often we can hear jazz mixed with elements of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (all commissioned by the Dalai Lama). But that's precisely what the jazz vespers *Convergence* does. Composed by University of Miami Frost School of Music Dean Shelly Berg, *Convergence* had its world premiere in Los Angeles, where Berg, Carmen Bradford, and Tierney Sutton performed. Now all three are reunited, joined by musicians from the Frost jazz program, for a benefit on **Saturday, April 6**, at 8:00 p.m. at the Church of St. Martha (9301 Biscayne Blvd.). The night ends with Champagne and desserts. A donation of \$50 per person is requested.

Proceeds benefit St. Martha's concert series. Go to www.saintmartha.tix.com.

Magic Carpet Ride

Although we can get mired in depressing news from the Middle East, the story of *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* is always a counterpoint. At the Aventura Arts and Cultural Center (3385 N.E. 188th St.) on **Sunday, April 14**, this play reminds us of the rich cultural tapestry of the region. The tale involves Arabs, Persians, Chinese, and North Africans, along with magic carpets and genies and very special lamps. Take the kids. Tickets range from \$3 to \$14, with two performances at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Go to www.aventuracenter.org.

A Walk on the Historic Side

For a long time, the Edgewater District, just north of downtown, was a neglected neighborhood filled with old Miami homes and some dicey properties. Then the building boom threatened to transform it into a high-rise alley, before the Great Recession put an end to that. As HistoryMiami's **East of Biscayne: Edgewater Walking Tour** will point out, both early Miami's development and the latest urban building burst are most dramatically revealed in this neighborhood. On **Sunday, April 14**, from 10:00 a.m. till noon, you can find out why

with a bayside stroll. Cost for members is \$20; \$30 for nonmembers. Go to www.historymiami.org.

Good Clean Fun

Invasive animal species have made headlines lately, mostly because of those 20-foot-long slithering critters in the Everglades and some scary big fish in the canals farther north. But just as damaging to our environment are invasive plants. So as part of **Eco-Action Days at Greynolds Park** (17530 W. Dixie Hwy.), volunteers are being asked to weed out some of that harmful vegetation, as well as garbage that clueless humans leave behind. But this is also just a good excuse to get out while the weather is still cool. It all happens on **Saturday, April 20**, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meet at the boathouse. Reservations are required. Call 305-948-2891.

A Show of Gay Pride

With the majority of the country, including the president and vice president, supporting gay marriage — it's about time, don't you think? — this year's **Miami Beach Gay Pride Parade**, which actually includes a number of events taking place from **Monday, April 8, through Sunday, April 14**, should be a real celebration. The parade on Sunday, April 14, starts at noon, departing from



Esperanza Comes to Town

Esperanza Spalding isn't just an acoustic jazz bassist and singer (although she won a Grammy for that). She also plays electric bass and travels around with a 12-piece band, creating huge, sprawling ensemble sounds that are part jazz, part soul. Spalding will be here to debut her latest album, *Radio Music Society*, on which she plays bass and double bass and sings lead vocals. She comes to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (1300 Biscayne Blvd.) on **Friday, April 19**, at 8:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$35 to \$95. Go to www.arshtcenter.org.

the corner of 5th Street and Ocean Drive. Although you can show up and watch for free, grandstand seats cost \$35, which includes a breakfast, mimosas, and Bloody Marys. For a full schedule of events, go to www.miamibeachgaypride.com.

It Takes Five to Tango

Tango is a style of music that was hatched from a mixture of European and African traditions in Argentina, much like jazz was in North America. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that tango and jazz have some common roots. The Argentine-born, Brooklyn-based musician Pablo Aslan wants to prove that to you, on **Saturday, April 20**, with his **Pablo Aslan Quintet**, which pays homage to Astor Piazzolla, who pioneered a jazz-tango sound in the 1950s and 1960s. This is the final performance in an excellent concert season presented by MDC Live Arts. The show begins at 8:00 p.m. at the Colony Theatre (1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach). Tickets are \$25. Go to www.mdlivearts.org.

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



TransAtlantic Beats at the Bandshell

Sometimes listening to lively music and leaving open the possibility of dancing outdoors on a spring Miami evening is the only way to go. Which is why we love the **2013 Heineken TransAtlantic Festival**. In the newly revamped North Beach Bandshell (7275 Collins Ave., Miami Beach), on **Friday, April 5, and Saturday, April 6**, thanks to the Rhythm Foundation, an amazing array of world music groups will take the stage, including the electro-tango Bajofundo on Friday and the Colombian fusion band Bomba Estereo on Saturday. Concerts begin at 7:00 p.m. Tickets cost \$23; \$35 for both nights. (There are also some free after parties.) Call 305-672-5202 or go to www.transatlanticfestival.com.

Biscayne Crime Beat

Compiled by Derek McCann

Whatever Floats Your Flat-Screen

700 Block of NE 79th Street

Being a boat dealer may sound glamorous, and maybe it is. But there are headaches involved, such as weirdoes running around your property. A man entered this boatyard and proceeded to run from boat to boat, as if he were on some sort of bizarre yachting vacation. His version of a sea outing was to steal flat-screen televisions from two boats. His deeds were picked up by security cameras, yet security could not stop him. Police were called. They set up a perimeter search, to no avail. There is no known accomplice, but the suspect carried three flat-screen televisions somewhere.

Another Crazy Incident Downtown

1000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Clueless woman lost her parking receipt and was told it would cost \$50 to retrieve her car. She objected. Police were called. She told police she would pay the fee, but then got into her car and attempted to drive away without paying. Police managed stop her. She became, according to the police report, aggressive. The police officers then decided to “subdue” her. Crime Beat does not know what they did, but apparently she still had enough energy to throw her body around the back of the police car. At the jail, she claimed she was

having a seizure. Rescue workers responded. While Crime Beat can sympathize with someone who is charged a pointless and punitive fee, we also know that a criminal record (and possible Baker Acting) is a lot worse.

This Crime Is Under Construction

6100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

Miami’s Finest responded to a report of a theft of an air-conditioning unit; thieves apparently stole it from the roof of a building at approximately 3:00 in the morning. To make matters worse, it was the third time in the last week this building has been hit. The scene was contaminated by hulking but inept construction workers, so no fingerprints. Three burglaries committed at this address in a week? Maybe a demolition company should be called in to end the misery.



Art by God, Theft by Scum

3705 Biscayne Blvd.

A science nerd surveyed a meteorite rock for sale at the Art by God store. He expressed great interest and wanted to learn more. We guess he had questions like “What meteor did it break off from?” and “How many billions of years old is it?”

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Fair questions from a science geek, but in Miami, geeks can be just as scummy as hoods. When the kindly employee went to help another customer, she returned to find the curious and earnest patron missing, along with the rock. No doubt the thief is a *Star Wars* freak, so the rock is likely located in a dive apartment far, far away.

Livin' La Vida Criminal

601 Biscayne Blvd.

At the Premio Lo Nuestro awards show at the American Airlines Arena, Latin stars were honored for their contributions to music. One woman, feeling the love in the air, had to use the bathroom and left her jacket on the back of her chair. You would think Univision would be watching out for this sort of thing, but someone stole that jacket. The jacket contained the woman's cell phone and her driver's license. Regrettably, there are no witnesses. This probably happened during Ricky Martin's number. Thieves know no one can take their eyes off Ricky.

Coffee, Tea, Or My Things?

7800 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

A woman invited her next-door neighbor to her abode for coffee. This is a great

way to start a friendship. In such a setting, one can talk about anything. Unfortunately, the deep conversation became a deep cleaning — of the owner's items. Things went missing and the owner accused her guest of taking them. The two began to yell at one another. Police were called and the "she said/she said" debacle continued. No one was arrested, but somehow, we suspect these neighbors have a little less faith in humanity.

Another Promising Legal Mind Wasted

1000 Block of NE 84th Street

Police saw a homeless man carrying a black bag while walking away from a home. They stopped him. Guess they profiled him because such a man should not be carrying a black bag, walking away from a residence not his own. In this case, the police were right. The man spontaneously offered: "I did not break into that house. The bag was sitting right there in front of the door, so I took it." Police promptly arrested him and, just like that, another person is now in the Miami-Dade lockup. Somehow taking something that was not his was justified

because he did not damage or burglarize the home. Nice try.

A Pretty Good Night Out, Except for the Ending

300 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

This drunk (of course) got into a beautiful Range Rover with his new girlfriends (of 20 minutes) and began having some fun in the back seat. Well, during a particular sex act, one girlfriend took his wallet while the other slipped his \$5000 Rolex off his wrist. They also took his cell phone. Before he had a chance to grasp any of this, they dropped him off and promised to come back for him. They never did.

Post Office Refuses to Stamp Out Crime

7600 Block of NE 3rd Place

We know this happens, but rarely is it reported. A suspicious woman paced nervously around victim's mailbox, looking in various directions. After several minutes, she opened the mailbox and removed the victim's mail. She then went running full speed into a waiting vehicle. (Yes, there was a waiting vehicle,

because one man's junk mail is another man's treasure.) No arrests have been made. The post office was notified, but representatives told police they will not be responding to the incident. Guess they would have to raise the price of stamps to pay for those types of investigations.

All That and a Free Night In Jail, Too?

1700 Block of N. Bayshore Drive

A woman had a lively time consuming food and drink. After all we go through, shouldn't we all eat, drink, and be merry once in a while? You don't even need money. Just run up a tab and sneak out without paying. That's what this woman did. Maybe you'll get away, or maybe you'll be stopped by police. In this case, it was the latter. The woman did not help matters by cursing at the officers. (After all that merriment, why become hostile?) She went out with style, readers, yelling all the way to the police car and, likely, later vomiting in the jailhouse toilet. But she had her fill, and only paid for it with a criminal record.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Of Gorillas and Ghosts

At Crandon Gardens, the remains of the old Crandon Park Zoo provide a scenic, somewhat spooky backdrop

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Are you over Miami? Think you've seen everything? Well, let me suggest that your Miami bucket list cannot be complete without this item checked off: Visit the haunted zoo.

The zoo in question, now known as Crandon Gardens, is both haunted and hauntingly beautiful, an apt microcosm of our mangled metropolis. The old-timers will remember this place as the Crandon Park Zoo, and newcomers will discover the cages and other ruins of that zoo as ghostly interlopers in a lush and photo-ready backdrop.

This hidden garden in plain sight is one of the most beautiful locations in South Florida, yet it is shockingly devoid of visitors. Wedding photographers know about it and regularly bring their clients here for photo shoots, without the need to pay for privacy. The privacy comes by default, because practically no one seems to know this park exists.

Not that Crandon Gardens is off the beaten path. It occupies 30-odd acres inside of Key Biscayne's Crandon Park, one of the area's most popular parks and the setting for the annual Sony Open

tennis mega-event (which explains the traffic last month). The problem with the botanical garden may be that it gets bypassed in favor of the park's other attractions, such as the beach, cabanas, picnic areas, nature center and preserve, sports fields, and the carousel with its expansive tot lot. With all that, who has time to relax in a garden?

But you must, especially bird-lovers. The free-roaming exotic birds are superior to those that can be viewed at most zoos. Then there are the reflecting lakes, the wide-open animal cages, and the surreptitious art. The strange and the beautiful collide here as if arranged by master surrealist Salvador Dali.

Back in 2003, the *BT*'s current editor was editor-in-chief of the weekly *New Times*, and he named Crandon Gardens "Best Public Park." Still, it remains obscure. It has no Website. Its name is not mentioned on Miami-Dade's Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces website. A Google search for "Crandon Gardens" brings up 289 results, whereas a search for the much smaller "Miami Beach Botanical Garden" brings up 122,000 results.

I first discovered Crandon Gardens by accident. I did it while riding my bike to the farthest end of a massive parking



Placid lakes and painted cages: The strange and the beautiful collide here as if arranged by Salvador Dali.

lot. In fact, I couldn't tell you how to drive to Crandon Gardens, as the closest potential entrance seems to be permanently closed. It is marked by a large, seemingly unused yellow gatehouse. (Perhaps, at night, a phantom operator collects fees.)

A Crandon Park official told me to enter at the South Beach gate and ask for directions. (Note: Crandon Park admission is five dollars on weekdays and six dollars on weekends.)

My directions are: Drive as far south as possible and, when you see the empty yellow building, you're there.

Better yet: Arrive by bike or on foot, and it's free. Bikes here are ideal.

Once inside, you will be on your own. No signs inside the gardens tell you where you are or where to go. (Yup, so Miami.) You simply have to wander around and discover it for yourself. Be safe.

Don't be surprised if you attract a gaggle of geese or a pod of peacocks. People clearly feed the birds regularly, and they know how to work the system. Their aggressive friendliness, however, may frighten small children.

The red-headed cranes, much taller than a child, are a bit more standoffish, but their beauty is exquisite. Their bodies don't sleek gray tuxedos and taper to a thin neck topped by a hat of scarlet red. These



Crandon Gardens is home to many types of birds, some exotic, many aggressively friendly to humans.

are Sandhill cranes, the same ones on display at Zoo Miami.

In the past, five types of swans nested in the garden, but they have been killed by rare American crocodiles, according to Valerie Cassidy, founder of the defunct Gardens of Crandon Park Foundation and a longtime volunteer caretaker of the gardens.

Other flocks of birds persist. Have you ever heard a male peacock vibrate his feathers in full array? Perhaps if you live in El Portal, but for those of us who don't live in a bird sanctuary, a free-roaming peacock remains astonishing. I was entranced when one peacock, strutting alongside a lake, put on a 15-minute show of courtship. The peahens, on the other hand, were not impressed.

Besides flocks of birds striking a pose, the most remarkable sight at Crandon Gardens is the vestige of the zoo that closed in 1980. In the back are pits surrounded by coral rock. Cages appear

BT photos by Jim W. Harper

CRANDON GARDENS AT CRANDON PARK

Park Rating

6747 Crandon Blvd.
Key Biscayne, FL 33149
305-361-5421

Hours: Sunrise to sunset
Picnic tables: Yes
Barbecues: No
Picnic pavilions: No
Tennis courts: No
Athletic fields: No
Night lighting: No
Swimming pool: No
Playground: No
Entrance fee: \$5 weekdays;
\$6 weekends



At some point after the county zoo departed in 1980, artists decorated many of the old animal cages.



This is an ideal place to explore by bike, better still if you enter the park by bicycle — no admission fee.



The Virgin Mary as painted and tiled by an unknown artist, one among many surprises awaiting visitors.

prehistoric; some are painted with murals and have been left wide open, allowing visitors to pose like monkeys at some ghoulish, unauthorized Art Basel event. You have to ask yourself: Why are these abandoned cages still here?

Like many Miami stories, this one gets complicated. It follows the saga of the Matheson family, which owned most of Key Biscayne when it was a coconut plantation. Dade County Commissioner Charles Crandon persuaded them to

donate nearly 1000 acres to the public, and Crandon Park opened in 1947.

In the late 1980s, the Matheson family sued the county over the development of the tennis stadium, already under construction, and they supposedly gained the authority to block any future plans they didn't like. (Family spokesman Bruce Matheson has filed dozens of objections over the years, most of which have been ignored.)

Artemas Richardson of Olmstead Associates (of New York Central Park

fame), created a master plan for the park and gardens. Fights ensued over various aspects, including the gardens, which were slated to become a hybrid of lush landscapes and art.

To piece together what really happened over the past few decades would make for a James Michener-style novel and might require the insights of a psychic medium. The gardens were left for volunteers to salvage. As for their future, who knows?

If you look carefully there, you will find a rock garden that contains an elevated tunnel. On my first visit years ago, it was empty. On a visit this year, it featured a combination painting/mosaic of the Virgin Mary. Who did this? Why?

This place offers shadows and seduction — questions, not answers. So don't ask why. Simply submit to Miami's hidden tropical kingdom.


Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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A Nasty Shell Game

Coming face-to-face with a crustacean killer in the Florida Keys

By Wendy Doscher-Smith
BT Contributor

It takes a bit of living, but eventually anyone with half a brain realizes that evil is everywhere at all times, and no, it does not look like a little red man who carries a pitchfork.

Sometimes, though, evil does hunt little red nonhumans. It is exactly this form of evil that I encountered on an otherwise beautiful late afternoon in the Keys.

My husband, Jeremy, and I towed Big Betty, our canoe, behind our little Subaru, destined for Marathon. Thinking back, the only thing missing from this potential Subaru commercial-in-the-making was a dog. Of which we have plenty. However, the dogs remained at home.

Minutes after checking in to our hotel, we took Big Betty over to the nearest put-in. Owning a canoe is great, but all the niggling details that go along with it aren't. Preparing the canoe, hooking up the canoe to the trailer, making sure the canoe is on the trailer properly as you drive (which requires many rear-view mirror glances) — in addition to the more than occasional roadside stopping when it isn't — gets old.

No fan of niggling details, I'm the assigned "documenter/photographer." Upon arrival, I scope out the put-in. There are usually plenty of photos taken before we even launch.

Since we arrived in Marathon at day's end, the only canoeing action involved sunset. We hurriedly threw on our



BT photo by Wendy Doscher-Smith

swimsuits in order to make this happen. Had I known what lurked at the put-in's edge, I assure you that analyzing the bathroom tile grout in our room would have been my choice of activity.

At the put-in I noticed a scraggly, longhaired guy in his mid-20s at the water's edge. His filthy hair immediately struck me. I expected to see a procession of multi-legged critters beginning the "March Out of the White Guy Dreads." Great shot, I figured; I've got zoom.

While focusing on Dirt Head, I failed to notice the bag near him. Dirt Head noticed me, though, smiled, and said, "This is the best part!" Confused, I replied, "Of what?" Dirt Head smiled again, and I noticed a twinkle in his eye (I know it's a cliché, but I swear I saw it): "I get to rip their heads off!"

Just as I was registering this new and disturbing bit of information (unless he was referring to dolls; I gladly rip their heads off for art projects), a cheery blonde woman came up to us.

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Dirt Head: "You want to see them?"

Cheery Blonde: "Sure!"

Dirt Head reached into his bag and plucked out maybe nine lobsters. He lined them up in a row on the dock. The lobsters sat there, looking sluggish and dejected. Still, I was enchanted by their shapes and colors and immediately started taking pictures.

Much like the time when my hairstylist chopped layers into my hair, and I watched wet pieces of hair fall into my lap and then onto the floor, I knew something was off, but I didn't know what. That time, it was the realization that my hair was no longer ponytail-worthy. This time, it was the lobsters' fate.

I took a bunch of photos of the soon-to-be-doomed lobsters, noticing Cheery Blonde doing the same. This awoke me from my snap-happy stupor.

Me: "What is this?"

Dirt Head: "The best part. I get to rip their heads off. Want to help me?"

[Note No. 1: I actually think Dirt Head was flirting, showing off, or both. He really thought I'd be interested in beheading live creatures.]

Me (staring in shock and horror): "I'm a vegetarian."

Dirt Head: "So, you wanna?"

Me (eyes widening): "What!?"

[Note No. 2: At that moment it didn't occur to me that Dirt Head could be that stupid, so I figured he was challenging me, which led me to exercise the nostril flare. If this had been a NatGeo "urban nature" special on "Land-Dwelling Mammal Humanoids of the Florida Keys," the British-accented narrator might have said, "Before striking, the protective animal-loving woman sends out a warning nostril flare."]

Then I heard...

Cheery Blonde: "If she's a vegetarian, the last thing she wants to do is rip their heads off!"

Standing just feet from Lobster Dahmer — Dirt Head seemed like too innocuous a nickname for this character — I had forgotten about the Cheery Blonde. Now I looked at her, then looked down at the lobsters, one of which was trying to crawl away, toward the parking lot. Poor, confused crustacean.

Lobster Dahmer (fixing lobster with a crazed, homicidal look): "What? You trying to get away from me?"

Me: "Of course he's trying to get away from you."

No reply. Lobster Dahmer was busy snatching the helpless lobster. [Note No. 3: Florida lobsters cannot pinch like Maine lobsters, meaning Lobster Dahmer was no brave hunter.]

Disgusted, I surveyed the scene: Line of lobsters. Out of element. Suffocating. Options: Kick them back in? No. That might kill them, too. Take them away? No gloves. How many can I scoop up at once? Survey says: Lobsters will likely be plated tonight.

Cheery Blonde retrieved a white pail for Lobster Dahmer.

Me (grim, resigned): "Is that for the heads?"

Cheery Blonde: "For the tails."

Me: "Why?"

Cheery Blonde: "That's the part we eat."

Me: "What about the rest?"

Cheery Blonde: "Oh, the heads are thrown back. We're not the only ones who eat them."

Me: "So they will not go to waste then? Other animals will eat their remains?"

Lobster Dahmer: "Hey! I'm an animal. I need to eat!"

I shifted my eyes slightly in his direction, and scowled.

Cheery Blonde (running interference): "Well, probably not."

Enter Jeremy: "See? I told you it takes forever to set up the canoe."

He greeted Cheery Blonde and Lobster Dahmer. Then he leaned in toward me, still smiling, and mumbled, "Don't start a fight."

Lobster Dahmer began his ugly work, ripping heads off before joyfully reaching up high and rocketing them into Florida Bay. Some of them he treated as if they were stones going for a little lake skip.

Me: "So, you enjoy ripping heads off puppies, too?"

Lobster Dahmer: "Why? You got a puppy that needs his head ripped off?"

I looked at him, tired and sorry this half-wit was these lobsters' executioner. They deserved better. "Oh, forget it." I told him. "You...you are just...bellicose!"

I stomp off. Bellicose? More like psychotic.

Cheery Blonde trailed behind me. "But, you know, lobsters are the cockroaches of the sea. Plus I make a mean lobster macaroni and cheese! (She smiled.) You'd love it. Really."

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com



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How Green Is My Lifestyle?

Our resident eco-writer takes stock of his everyday habits

By **Jim W. Harper**
BT Contributor

Stop reading this if you've heard my life story before. I'm kidding. Not that I could tell you my story in a few paragraphs, but I can reveal some personal achievements that demonstrate my commitment to living the principles that I write about.

These are continuous challenges. It is much easier to talk the talk than to walk this green walk.

I was inspired to take inventory of my personal habits by someone who recently challenged my green credentials because I could not assign a number to my carbon footprint. (Who can?) I have tried to calculate it, and I have found that various standards lead to various results. I would appreciate knowing which calculator to use so that I can compare my footprint to an average adult in Africa.

I am American and, by default, Americans have very high environmental footprints, double that of our British counterparts and other Europeans that have the same standard of living. *Double!* Until our nation cuts consumption in half, we can't even begin to discuss footprints.

But we can talk about personal responsibility, which is an all-American value. Here is how I have tried to practice what I preach.

My yard has officially gone green. This year it earned the highest certification possible for a "Florida-friendly yard"

from the state's agricultural extension service. That's a big deal to me, because it took a decade to achieve.

Starting with a landscaper who favored native plants, the transformation involved letting go of a "traditional" South Florida yard. No grass. No sprinklers. No ficus hedge. No showy flowers to fertilize. No fuss.

Besides being easy to maintain and earth-friendly, a yard dominated by Florida natives is also the most beautiful, in my humble opinion. It reminds me of my childhood in western Boca Raton, where the snakes slithered across the sugar sand on dappled shadows cast by slash pines. Wild Florida is beautiful Florida, and landscaping can capture a small slice of it.

My transportation habits have also changed. After my old bike was stolen from Barry University a few years back, I bought a new one for \$300 and have probably saved at least that much on short trips that would otherwise require gasoline. I take shuttle buses as often as possible, and I have kept my 1999 car in good shape. When that one dies, my next car will be highly efficient.

My travel addiction has also faded. I used to think nothing of flying cross-country for a meeting or across continents for a vacation. But now I think about balancing and replacing such adventures with local meetings and staycations.

The good thing about my previously travel-heavy lifestyle is that I have seen



University of Florida

firsthand how wasteful we Americans are in comparison to the rest of the world. We take so much for granted, particularly how much we take and take.

Food footprints are important, and telling. Because photosynthesis is the basis of sustainability, going green means leaning toward vegetarianism. Although I remain an omnivore, I have become vegetable-strong and a committed locavore. I gave up certain seafood, reduced my meat-based meals, and try to avoid highly processed foods from unknown origins. This struggle never ends.

When I walk to CVS or Publix, I carry reusable bags. When I go out for coffee, I either bring a mug or carry around the plastic lid I acquire until I find a recycling bin. Yes, I also turn out the lights when I leave a room. (Don't you?)

I try to practice the three R's in priority order. Before I recycle, I try to reuse, which means switching from paper napkins to cloth and from paper towels to rags. Before I reuse, I try to reduce, which means installing a low-flow showerhead in the bathroom and a rain barrel in the backyard. It means creating a compost pile, instead of tossing waste into the garbage.

Reduce garbage first, then reuse items, and, lastly, recycle.

I do all these things, yet I fail to achieve sustainability because I am a middle-class American. I habitually purchase and consume many things that I don't need from unknown, faraway places. Thankfully most of the earth's seven billion people are much less wasteful than we are.

So to all the readers who think they are green, take a look in the global mirror, a funhouse mirror that makes Americans look very fat. Except in this case it isn't an illusion. Our collective footprint is massive.

So why not give up and live fat and happy until I die?

For me, mindless consumption does not bring much happiness. I have a suspicion that more and more people are waking up to this realization. We have been raised to consume, but we can choose to smell the flowers, instead of eating them.

My name is Jim, and I am a recovering materialist.

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

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Mother Knows Breast

How you feed your infant is your choice, even if you have to fight for it

By Crystal Brewe
BT Contributor

Someone recently commented to me that a local university was “progressive” because it designated an official space for nursing mothers. Hmm... *Progressive?* So if a business designates a space for you to relieve your bowels or microwave your Hot Pocket, is that also “progressive”?

I breast-fed each of my children for 13 months. I won't go on and on about the virtues and health benefits, except to say breastfeeding has positive physical and psychological effects on mother and baby alike. But it isn't easy. There are milk-production issues, pain, and a multitude of other unexpected reasons why, for some moms, it is not possible.

Breastfeeding is emotional. When, with our first child, a nurse told us the baby needed formula, I felt I had failed my only-hours-old infant. Said nurse and a lactation consultant had a knock-down, drag-out fight right in the hospital room that ended with them *taping* a tube attached to a bottle of formula to my breasts. They wanted to condition both the baby and my milk-makers while still allowing me to nourish my newborn.

This stressful experience was imprinted on me in my first few hours of motherhood. Feeding my children became singularly important to me, regardless of where we were. I openly

railed against anyone who gave me the stink eye when I fed my child while in public. Why would I get such a negative reaction for this?

Is our society so puritanical that many view this as a sexual act? Is our fear linked to the sexual repression of women in the 18th Century? Facebook bans images of breastfeeding if nipples are exposed. Really, Facebook? You, too? All this fuss over a little areola?

Understanding this public stigma, I had a hooter-hider to match every outfit, so as not to offend the weirdos who considered this act “dirty.” Let's get these people on the therapist's couch and dig down. Is this Oedipus Complex 2.0?

Thankfully, great organizations like the Gathering Place in Miami are helping new parents understand and navigate these challenges. Community support is imperative during the early days of parenthood (and before). The Gathering Place fosters an environment of nurturing support. From prenatal fitness to childbirth classes to “Footsteps” — a new-moms group — the Gathering Place unites parents and strengthens their experiences and choices.

The Gathering Place has also become one of the first places in Miami to “recycle” mothers' breast milk for needy and critically ill infants across America. Mothers who produce more than their babies can consume may donate extra breast milk that is screened and pasteurized.



This program to ensure needy babies are not deprived of mothers' milk *is* progressive — although *sharing* the task of feeding other people's children is not.

Historically, “wet nurses” were frequently called upon when mothers were ill or unable to provide. This practice maintained the importance and credibility of breastfeeding but underwent a paradigm shift with the advent of new cultural ideals that came with industrialization in the late 19th Century. Wet-nursing quickly became an occupation for lower-class women and now is more or less nonexistent.

A co-worker of mine astutely pointed out that there were probably a lot of challenges to this. As an exhausted mom who breast-fed two babies, she just couldn't imagine that there were many superwomen out there able to feed their own kids *and* pump for others.

Matilda, our first child, was born in Hawaii, where there exists a large New Age community, of which my husband and I considered ourselves fringe members. That is, of course, until we confronted our own limits.

When Matilda was three months old, we were invited to an “adults only” holiday party. Our close friends, who also had a three-month-old, graciously offered

to baby-sit. We left them with plenty of pumped-with-love breast milk and told them to call if they needed *anything*.

Engorged from four hours away from my new baby, I returned to a happily sleeping bundle. My fellow mother and friend proudly told me she had fed Matilda, which is why she was snoozing so cozily. Wait, I thought. *You* fed her? Did she mean the breast milk I left or that *she* fed her? It was the latter.

That night I was smacked in the face with my own emotional boundary on the breast-feeding question. I felt like someone had kissed my boyfriend when I wasn't looking. Worse. I was seconds away from a violent “Oh, no, you *didn't!*” reaction. I couldn't pinpoint why the situation upset me as much as it did, but every time I relay the story, other mothers manage to find their own reasons to be upset.

We are programmed by our experiences and our reactions to society's conditioning. Breastfeeding is emotional. Do what feels right, but make sure you are clear with your babysitter about your limits.

For more information about the Gathering Place, go to www.theplacewegather.com.

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Home, Dead Home

A decaying tree can provide a wonderful habitat for wildlife — just make sure you've got a place for it to fall when the time comes

By Jeff Shimonski
BT Contributor

When I drive home every day, I pass by a small, well-known plant and animal sanctuary. Something that always catches my eye is a very tall, dead, and still-standing pine tree.

It is probably 40 feet tall and has been dead for at least a couple of years. One of the things I do for a living is evaluate trees for their overall health and structural stability, so I can't help but mentally measure the probability of this tree failing at some point, and wondering what its likely targets would be. A target is people, animals, or property that could possibly be struck and damaged if and when a tree, or parts of it, fail.

We all know that, at some point, a dead tree will fall down. So why are dead trees sometimes intentionally left standing (and did the property owner first check with his or her insurance agent)? The dead pine tree I mentioned easily could fall onto a well-traveled sidewalk or adjacent road.

Just this past month a superior court judge in California upheld a \$7.6 million jury verdict against a city for not taking care of a palm tree that ended up toppling over in a storm in 2010, striking a man standing in his yard and paralyzing him.

The photo that accompanies this article shows a squirrel on the trunk of a dead palm, checking me out. She's standing just below her nest, a hollow cavity in the trunk. This palm succumbed to the fungus ganoderma a couple of years ago and, since it is in an isolated section of my yard at home, I decided to leave the 25-foot-tall trunk as a habitat for wildlife.

My experience tells me dead palm trunks typically will remain standing a couple of years before they fall down under their own weight, but I check the stability of this one every couple of weeks. When I deem the trunk too unstable, I will just push it over. (That's how I found out the squirrels had moved in; they got really fussy one day when I pushed on the trunk, rattling their home.)

Meanwhile I've been watching a series of animals nest in a single hollow on this trunk. A family of red-bellied woodpeckers first made the hollow and raised two babies to maturity. Next came a pair of screech owls that chased out nonnative starlings that had been checking out the cavity. That was really cool.

The owls raised three babies. I would see the family gather in neighboring trees in the evening once the babies fledged (grew wings and were able to fly on their own), at least for a month or so before they all flew off. After the owls came the squirrel family, which currently



BT photo by Jeff Shimonski

A fussy squirrel guarding her nest on my dead palm trunk.

inhabits the trunk and has already raised a couple of offspring. I know this trunk will not last much longer, but it has been valuable as a wildlife habitat.

Dead trees are a big thing in wildlife conservation. I once read an academic paper published in a serious forestry journal on how to create dead wood and snags in the canopies of tall forest trees so birds would have more nesting areas. The paper described how students infected shotgun shells with various species of wood decaying fungi and shot the bullets into the upper trunks of trees. It was a very interesting read, but I'm not sure how successful they were.

Woodpeckers are able to excavate a cavity in dead and decaying wood for a nest and, after they have raised their brood, other species can utilize the cavity for their own purposes. This is why many people leave dead trees standing. My wildlife habitat palm trunk was an excellent example of leaving a dead tree for a "highest and best use," and I plan to keep dead trunks standing in my yard as long as possible.

(I also utilize dead tree trunks to grow edible mushrooms. It's not too difficult to inoculate the wood with the fungus mycelium, the stringy white or black threads that grow throughout the wood that are actually the body of the fungus).

But since I'm also aware of the serious consequences of a falling tree, I'm very careful about what surrounds these trees. If I owned or managed the property where that tall dead pine tree resides, I would have removed the top 20 feet or so of the tree, so when it fell, it would not reach the sidewalk or street and possibly injure people or damage property.

Those of you who have enough yard space to give native wildlife a home in dead trees, remember to keep an eye on what surrounds the tree, in preparation for the day it comes down.

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

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com

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Pardon My Chardonnay

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

By Bill Citara
BT Contributor

Say “California” and you probably think of Los Angeles and Hollywood, San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge, Pacific beaches and the Sierra Nevada, the wine country and the gold country, actors turned politicians, air pollution, traffic jams, hovels that cost more than mansions, and mansions that cost more than the GDP of most Latin American nations.

Oh, and Chardonnay.

This is not a column about California Chardonnay.

Frankly, there have been too damn many columns about California Chardonnay. It’s as overexposed as your Aunt Millie’s vacation photos, been analyzed more often than Sigmund Freud’s patients. If I have to read one more column about California Chardonnay, I’m going to poke my eyes out with a red-hot knitting needle. Or start drinking beer.

But this *is* a column about Chardonnay. Just not Chardonnay from...you know. All it takes is one trip up and down the aisles of your local wine shop to see why Chardonnay is considered to be the world’s most popular white wine. Just about every region that can stomp a grape makes the stuff. As a wine grape, it’s easy to grow, can thrive in a variety of climates, is a good producer, and given the proclivities of the winemaker, can assume more different personalities

than your neighborhood psycho.

In a nutshell, those personalities range from Burgundy (and Chablis) to Australia, from lean, taut wines that taste of nuts and crisp fruit and calcium-rich soils to wines with more flab than John Goodman that taste of puréed mango spiked with drawn butter and oak chips. For this VINO, we’ll be navigating between the Scylla of the former and the Charybdis of the latter, starting leaner and lighter and ending with the richer and fuller bodied.

Which means, fittingly enough, beginning with a Chardonnay from France, the **2011 D’Autrefois**. It’s not nearly as austere or complex as those White Burgundies and Chablis (and about one-tenth the price), but it does deliver bracing aromas of citrus, green apple, and minerals, which pretty much tells you what it’s going to taste like. It’s a nice wine, though a little tart, with a short finish. Great with fish and shellfish.

Then there’s the **2012 Excelsior** from South Africa. I have a thing about inexpensive South African wines: I can’t stand ‘em. (It’s a weird earthy/funky/diesel thing, if you must know.) But I’ll make an exception for this one. It’s got a hint of that earthy-funky business going on, but otherwise it’s all soft lemon-lime and green-apple fruit, like a fleshier, fuller-bodied Sauvignon Blanc. So I may have to revisit my South African prejudice. (No pun intended.)

Right smack in the middle of the road (where Jim Hightower says you

usually find only double-yellow lines and dead armadillos) is an Australian product, the **Nugan Estate 2011 Chardonnay**. Its creamy, almost viscous texture belies its burst of Meyer lemon acidity at first sip, but then it opens up to reveal flavors of ripe peaches and melons and a little tropical fruit. It does tend to keep you guessing, but I like it.

Carrying its weight proudly, despite being from France, is **Thierry and Guy’s 2011 Fat Bastard**. Not quite so portly as its name might suggest, it does show off a noseful of vanilla, caramel, and toasty oak, with lots of tropical fruit, peach, and pear on the palate.

If you haven’t figured out by now that South American wines are some of the best values on the market, well...just go back to sleep. I’ll try not to wake you.

Both the **2010 Porta Reserve** from Chile and the **2010 Bodega Elena** from Argentina are terrific deals at \$8.99 each, offering all the lush and luscious tropical and stone fruit Chardonnay hounds demand, with just enough citrus acidity to keep things honest.







Not surprisingly, I guess, the fruitiest, most zaftig wine of the tasting is from the U.S. — no, not from California, but Washington’s Columbia Valley. It’s the **Thorny Rose 2010 Chardonnay**, a wine



The North Miami Total Wine & More (14750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-3270) is where you’ll find the D’Autrefois and Excelsior Chardonnays for \$9.99 and the Porta Reserve for \$8.99. The Fat Bastard costs \$9.99 at Publix (1776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-3433, and 14641 Biscayne Blvd., 305-354-2171), while the Nugan Estate goes for \$11.99 at the North Miami Crown Wine and Spirits (12555 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-9463). Finally, the North Miami ABC Fine Wine & Spirits (16355 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-6525) offers the Thorny Rose for \$9.99 and the Bodega Elena for \$8.99.

that doesn’t beat around the vineyard with seductive aromas of mango, pear, and apricot, vanilla and toast, and a pinch of lemon-lime. In the mouth, what you sniff is what you get, which is not at all a bad thing. And I won’t have to poke my eyes out with a red-hot knitting needle.

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Out of the Kitchen, Into the Spotlight

Food news we know you can use

By **Pamela Robin Brandt**
BT Contributor

Last month was an award-winning one for restaurants and chefs in Biscayne Times territory, not just locally but nationally. The most surprising accolade came from *Forbes Travel Guide* (formerly the *Mobil Travel Guide*), which awarded five stars — the guide’s top rating, given this year to only 28 restaurants in the entire nation — to two downtown/Brickell restaurants: the Mandarin Oriental’s top-end **Azul**, predictably, but also chef/owner/perfectionist Kevin Cory’s eight-seat indie Japanese jewel **Naoe**.

The award puts Cory, who serves \$85 omakase (chef’s choice) dinners by reservation only, in the company of culinary legends like Thomas Keller (The French Laundry, Per Se) and Joel Robuchon. And last month OpenTable named Naoe #3 in the USA for best service — which would be Wendy Maharlika, a one-woman show in the dining room.

Additionally, when 2013’s James Beard Awards finalists were announced on March 18, two Miami chefs made the list, one from our side of the pond: **Hedy Goldsmith**, finalist for Outstanding Pastry Chef. Winners will be announced May 7. Meanwhile, check out her playful desserts, like lemon creamsicle pots de crème, at **Michael’s Genuine Food & Drink**, or refined retro/modern creations (like tarragon-spiked Florida citrus chess pie) at Michael Schwartz’s new upscale Design District venture, the **Cyprus**

Room (3620 NE 2nd Ave., 305-520-5197). There are numerous other intriguing recent openings to investigate, too.

OPENINGS

Biscayne Tavern (146 Biscayne Blvd., 305-307-8300). Though the menu at this downtown gastropub, a project from renowned restaurateur Jeffrey Chodorow (China Grill Management), won’t even be complete until mid-April, the place is open and an instant hit. Chef Will Biscoe’s food has been described as “Southern comfort meets urban fusion.” Most intriguing snacks so far: housemade potato chips with blue cheese fondue; eggplant fries with tomato jam; a poached duck egg on frisée with hog jowl lardons, candied walnuts, mustard/shallot dressing.

Temaris (1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-836-2747). Brought from China to Japan around the Seventh Century, temaris are hand balls. Used for sport but also considered folk art, the decorated balls are made from silk kimono scraps. Here at 23-year-old Venezuelan native Alex Perroni’s new eatery, temaris are bite-size balls made from sushi rice plus artful Asian/Latin American fusion toppings as delicious as they are decorative. Favorite temaris: Tokyo (spicy tuna, almonds, tobiko, stripes of huancaína sauce); Machu Picchu (white fish ceviche, scallion, aji amarillo sauce). Appetizers and entrée specials, too.

Daily Melt (3401 N. Miami Ave. #123, 305-573-0101). April is National Grilled Cheese Month, the perfect time to try this self-billed “ultimate grilled



cheese” eatery — as long as you don’t expect too much from early publicity touting Allen Susser as the chef behind the place. The connection is purely through his restaurant and hospital-ity consulting firm, not in the kitchen. As for ultimates, don’t expect artisan cheeses, or the creatively complex reinventions of traditional foods that Susser brought to Chef Allen. The aim here is “a simple, tasty menu that can be duplicated and executed in multiple locations.” That is, to create consistent chain food. Do expect sandwiches that convey homemade grilled-cheese goodness without the flaws found at home — improperly melted cheese, burnt bread, etc. And prices are a fraction of those at gourmet grilled-cheese food trucks.

Kouzina Greek Bistro (3535 NE 2nd Ave., 305-392-0506). In the space formerly occupied by Tapas & Tintos, this festive indoor/outdoor place has native Greek owners and a chef, Alexia Apostolidi, who’s also from Greece but will be familiar to Miamians for her fresh, top-quality dishes at North Beach’s defunct Ariston. Kouzina’s menu features mezes, both traditional (hummus, tzatsiki) and unusual (bacalao croquettes with garlic purée and roasted beet coulis).

Mercato (4141 NE 2nd Ave., 786-332-3772). Adjacent to Dena Marino’s hot new MC Kitchen, this just-opened artisanal market and breakfast/lunch café is for diners who want a quicker bite, or outstanding take-out. Pressed for time? How about a pressed sandwich like Marino’s Italian Cubano (with porchetta, prosciutto cotto, Swiss, pickles, and Dijon mustard dressing)? Also served, along with hot or cold sandwiches: a wide variety of elegant homemade breakfast pastries, breads, cookies, and fresh-baked quiches, plus salads and a daily changing soup. Market items include interesting jams, craft beers, and Marino’s private label EVOO.

SIDE DISH

No need to wait for farmers’ market days to score Freddy and Danielle Kaufmann’s made-in-Miami artisan sausages. **Proper Sausages** now has a proper home (9722 NE 2nd Ave., 305-401-0176). Also featured: Florida-raised beef, Florida-brewed beers, and on weekends, prepared foods.

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

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Dining Guide

Restaurant Listings

The Biscayne Corridor's most comprehensive restaurant guide. Total this month: 325.

Restaurant listings for the BT Dining Guide are written by Pamela Robin Brandt (restaurants@biscaynetimes.com). Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, but restaurants frequently change menus, chefs, and operating hours, so please call ahead to confirm information. Icons (\$\$\$) represent estimates for a typical meal without wine, tax, or tip. Hyphenated icons (\$-\$\$\$) indicate a significant range in prices between lunch and dinner menus, or among individual items on those menus.

=\$ \$10 and under

\$\$= \$20

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\$\$\$\$\$= \$50 and over

MIAMI

Brickell / Downtown

Aijo
1331 Brickell Bay Dr.
786-452-1637

Hidden within Jade condo, this sleek Japanese fusion restolounge (whose name means "love") is also a jewel. Food-loving Venezuelan owner Rene Buroz encourages innovation, and his chefs (including four from Zuma) respond with beautifully plated items as fun as they are flavorful. Don't miss the layered croquette (a sort of Asian croqueta: mouthwatering crispy rice, subtly smoked salmon, and creamy crab), Aijo kani (king crab legs with citrus foam clouds and rich emulsified butter dip), or creative cocktails from a mixologist who also juggles and plays with fire.

Area 31
270 Biscayne Boulevard Way, 305-424-5234

Not that the sleek interior of this seafood restaurant (named for fishing area 31, stretching from the Carolinas to South America) isn't a glamorous dining setting. But we'd eat outside. From the expansive terrace of the Epic condo and hotel on the Miami River, the views of Brickell's high-rises actually make Miami look like a real city. It's hard to decide whether the eats or drinks are the most impressive. The food is impeccably fresh regional fish, prepared in a clean Mediterranean-influenced style. The cocktails are genuinely creative. Luckily you don't have to choose one or the other. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Azul
500 Brickell Key Dr., 305-913-8254

Floor-to-ceiling windows showcase Biscayne Bay. But diners prefer ogling the raw-bar-fronted open kitchen, where globe-trotting chef Joel Huff crafts imaginative, often multi-part dishes – some Asian-inspired (like oysters with fresh wasabi, hibiscus granita, and Asian pear), as one would expect from the Mandarin Oriental's top eatery. But most of Huff's dishes are strongly European-influenced, primarily by New Spanish cuisine. Elegant, playfully molecular gastronomy-accented almond gazpacho with foie gras "snow," or "eggs, bacon & toast" (suckling pig, tempura duck egg, truffled potato, and speck "air") tell the story. \$\$\$

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

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

Bali Café
109 NE 2nd Ave., 305-358-5751

While Indonesian food isn't easy to find in Miami, downtown

has secret stashes – small joints catering to cruise-ship and construction workers. This cute, exotically decorated café has survived and thrived for good reason. The homey cooking is delicious, and the friendly family feel encourages even the timid of palate to try something new. Novices will want Indonesia's signature rijsttafel, a mix-and-match collection of small dishes and condiments to be heaped on rice. Note: bring cash. No plastic accepted here. \$-\$\$

Banana & Leaf
234 NE 3rd St., 786-431-5548

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

The Bar at Level 25 (Conrad Hotel)
1395 Brickell Ave., 305-503-6500

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

Bento Sushi & Chinese
801 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-603-8904

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

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 mayo and wasabi cream sauce; greed-inducing "bags of gold," deep-fried wonton beggar's purses with a shrimp/pork/mushroom/waterchestnut filling and tamarind sauce. \$\$

Bon Fromage
500 Brickell Ave. #106,
786-329-5632

Though independently owned instead of a chain cog, this cheese and wine café/shop is like a pint-size version of Midtown Miami's Cheese Course, right down to being officially self-service. But it is staffed by accommodating employees who, unofficially, do their best to double as servers for eat-in diners. The cheese (plus charcuterie) menu of garnished platters, salads, and crusty baguette sandwiches features numerous high-quality, imported favorites, but don't miss more unusual domestic treasures like Wisconsin bread, a cooked cheese that, like halloumi, doesn't melt but tantalizingly softens when heated. \$\$

Brother Jimmy's BBQ
900 S. Miami Ave. #135, 786-360-3650

The South is supposed to be the source of barbecue. But Bro J evidently didn't hear about that. His signature North Carolina pork 'cue comes from NYC, where the first Brother Jimmy's opened more than 20 years ago. Miami's location is actually the first south of the Mason-Dixon line. But the slow-smoked pulled pork but tastes righteous – no interfering glop, just hot sauce-spiked vinegar to balance the fat fattiness. There's other 'cue, too, including big (not baby back) ribs, and respectable brisket. \$\$-\$\$\$

Bryan in the Kitchen
104 NE 2nd Ave., 305-371-7777

This quirky café-market's chef/owner is a former

NEW THIS MONTH

MIAMI

BRICKELL / DOWNTOWN

Ceviche Piano
140 SE 1st Ave., 305-577-4414

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

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. \$\$\$

MIDTOWN / WYNWOOD / DESIGN DISTRICT

Feverish Gourmet Pop Shop
Shops at Midtown Miami
3552 NE 1st Ave., 305-482-1832

When kids are sick, you take them to a doctor. If your inner child feels feverish, though, the cure is Felecia Hatcher's handcrafted, vegan-friendly, natural and

smoothie-swilling model who is now into fresh whole foods, and through his eclectic "green gourmet" menu does uniformly reflect his dedication to ecological consciousness, it otherwise could only be described as intensely personal. Offerings are an odd but appealing saint/sinner mix, ranging from healthy pasta/grain salads and homemade-from-scratch snacks (beef jerky, granola) to unique cupcakes featuring not-too-sweet adult flavors and irresistible sticky buns. If we had to choose just one category, we'd sin. But luckily, you can have it all. \$-\$\$

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

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

Café Sambal
500 Brickell Key Dr.,
305-913-8358

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

Cavas Wine Tasting Room
900 S. Miami Ave. #180,
305-372-8027

Like South Miami's predecessor (now closed), this Cavas is mainly an upscale, high-tech tasting lounge for the

organic frozen treats – popsicles reinvented for grown-ups. At this literal mom-and-pop shop, Hatcher and husband Derek Pearson offer more than 25 changing flavors, some spiked (like locally sourced mango with bourbon), others just sophisticated (pineapple basil, strawberry balsamic, chocolate banana). No artificial flavors, no refined sugars. Particularly playful inner kids can customize with coatings ranging from nuts to truly nuts: pop rocks, potato chips, and more. \$

UPPER EASTSIDE

Sweet Saloon
7100 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-3999

At this dessert/snack/cocktail bar, from the owner of Moonchine, you'll find live and DJ entertainment, too, from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. – assuming you can find the place, that is. It's above the pan-Asian eatery, up a hidden back staircase. Asian savory snacks include dumplings, edamame, krab rangoons, satays. Desserts range from homey American (NY cheesecake, mini cupcakes) to continental (strawberries melba, housemade Belgian waffles, a shareable chocolate fondue/fruit platter). Actually, some cocktails double as desserts (a Godiva dark chocolate martini) or Asian savories (infusion jars of Stoli and lemongrass). \$\$

NORTH MIAMI

City Slickers
807 NE 123rd St., 305-891-6565

If you hear "hoagie" and instantly think "\$5 footlong," this health-minded gourmet sub shop will be a revelation. Instead of processed proteins and sad pre-prepared toppings inside factory-produced rolls, you get fresh-baked white, grain, or sundried tomato breads generously stuffed with quality meats (including rotisserie turkeys/chickens and rare roast beef made in-house), sparkling-fresh veggies, and more than a dozen imaginative dressings. Choose a signature sub or build your own. There are also signature or DIY salads and homemade soups, plus craft beers or wines to accompany.

wine-curious. Patrons buy prepaid cards to sample ounce, half-glass, or full-glass portions from more than 50 self-service dispensing machines. But there's an extensive selection of tapas/pintxos small plates, flatbread "pizzas," sandwiches, plus fully garnished charcuterie and cheese platters specially selected to pair well with vino. Additionally, more substantial dishes have been added, including a daily three-course lunch special and some tasty, bargain-priced soups (carrot cream with Gouda particularly recommended). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Chophouse Miami
300 S. Biscayne Blvd.,
305-938-9000

Formerly Manny's Steakhouse, Miami's Chophouse retains basically everything but the famed name (from the original Manny's in Minneapolis), and remains Miami's most intentionally masculine steakhouse. Here, ensconced in your black leather booth, everything is humongous: dry-aged choice-grade steaks like the Bludgeon of Beef (a boldly flavorful 40-ounce bone-in ribeye, described as "part meat, part weapon"); king crab legs that dwarf the plate; cocktail shrimp that could swallow the Loch Ness monster whole; two-fisted cocktails that would fell a T-Rex. Not for the frail. \$\$\$

The Corner
1035 N. Miami Ave.,
305-961-7887

With a Zuma alum in the kitchen, a Gigi alum crafting classic or creative cocktails, a warm pub feel, and hours extending from lunch to nearly breakfast the next morning, The Corner is transforming a desolate downtown corner into a neighborhood hangout. The nicely priced menu of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and sweets (the latter from Om Nom Nom's cookie queen Anthea Ponsetti) ranges from 100-percent homemade ice cream sandwiches to the Crazy Madame, France's elaborate Croque Madame (a béchamel sauce-topped grilled cheese/ham/fried egg sandwich) plus bacon and caramelized onion. \$\$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Crazy About You

1155 Brickell Bay Dr. #101, 305-377-4442
The owners, and budget-friendly formula, are the same here as at older Dolores. But You Can Call Me Lolita: Buy an entrée (all under \$20) from a sizable list of Mediterranean, Latin, American, or Asian-influenced choices (like Thai-marinated, churrasco with crispy shoestring fries) and get an appetizer for free, including substantial stuff like a Chihuahua cheese casserole with chorizo and pesto. The difference: This place, housed in the former location of short-lived La Broche, has an even more upscale ambiance than Dolores – including a million-dollar water view. \$\$\$

Cvi.che 105

105 NE 3rd Ave., 305-577-3454

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

db Bistro Moderne

345 Avenue of the Americas, 305-421-8800

Just two words – “Daniel Boulud” – should be enough for foodies craving creative French/American comfort cuisine to run, not walk, to this restaurant. If they can find it. (Hint: The mysterious “Avenue of the Americas” is really Biscayne Boulevard Way. Don’t ask.) Downtown’s db is an absentee celeb chef outpost, but on-site kitchen wizard Jarrod Verbiak flawlessly executes dishes ranging from the original NYC db Bistro’s signature foie gras/short rib/black truffle-stuffed burger to local market-driven dishes like crusted pompano with garlic/parsley veloute. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The Democratic Republic of Beer

255 NE 14th St., 305-372-4161

The food here? Beer is food! The DRB serves 400 beers from 55 countries, ranging from \$2 Pabst Blue Ribbon to \$40 Deus (an 11.5% alcohol Belgian *méthode Champenoise* brew). But for those favoring solid snacks, tasty global smallish plates include fried fresh zucchini with dip (cheese recommended); chorizo with homemade cilantro Mayo; or steak tacos, served Mexican-style with onions, cilantro, and spicy salsa. Sadly for breakfast-brew enthusiasts, the DRB isn’t open that early. But it is open late – till 5:00 a.m. \$\$

D-Dog House

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

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

Dolores, But You Can Call Me Lolita

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

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

Dominique Bistro-Club

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

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

Edge, Steak & Bar

1435 Brickell Ave., 305-358-3535

Replacing the Four Seasons’ formal fine dining spot Acqua, Edge offers a more kick-back casual welcoming vibe. And in its fare there’s a particularly warm welcome for non-carnivores. 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 purpose emphasis make this one steakhouse where those who don’t eat beef have no beef. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Elwoods Gastro Pub

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

Cordial English owners, classic rock music (sometimes live), and updated classic pub fare make this hangout a home. Made from scratch with artisan ingredients, traditional Brit bites like fish and chips can’t be beat – thick pieces of crispy beer-battered moist cod, served with hand-cut fries and “mushy [mashed] peas,” plus homemade tartar sauce and ketchup. All desserts are also made in-house, including a deliriously rich (but worth it) sticky date pudding with toffee sauce. Tie down your dental implants. They’re in for a wild ride. \$\$

Eos

485 Brickell Ave. (Viceroy Hotel), 305-503-0373

Originally opened by Michelin-starred “New Aegean” chef Michael Psilakis, Eos changed upon the chef’s departure into a more familiar Mediterranean resort eatery, minus Greek-inspired innovations. Non inspiration comes mainly from Spain

and Italy, with nods to Morocco and Latin America. Best bets include a tasting platter of Spanish cheeses and cured meats; a pistachio-garnished salad featuring Serrano ham, figs, and arugula; crispy parmesan risotto balls with prosciutto and smoked tomato dip; and olive/smoked paprika-rubbed roast chicken. At lunch burgers and upscale sandwiches are added. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Eternity Coffee Roasters

117 SE 2nd Ave., 305-609-4981

Normally we list only full restaurants, but even a (not so) simple cuppa joe from Chris Johnson and Cristina Garces’s sleek micro-roastery will convince anyone possessing taste buds that fine coffee can be as complex as fine wine, and as satisfying as solid food. A changing selection of superior single-origin beans (many varieties from the Garces family’s Colombian farm; most others from Ethiopia and Kenya), roasted in-house, produces “slow-pour” regular brews with amazing nuances of fruits, chocolate, and more. The espresso is so smooth sugar isn’t necessary. Other treats: flaky chocolate-stuffed “cigars” and other locally baked pastries. Free parking. \$

Fado Irish Pub

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

Unlike most Miami “Irish” pubs, which serve mostly American bar food, rarely foraying past fish and chips or shepherd’s pie, Fado (pronounced “f’doe”) has a menu reflecting the pub grub found today in Ireland, including solid standards. But most intriguing are dishes mixing classic and contemporary influences, particularly those featuring boxty, a grated/mashed potato pancake. Try corned beef rolls (boxty wraps, with creamy mustard sauce and cabbage slaw), or smoked salmon on mini-boxty “blini,” with capers and horseradish sauce. There’s a seasonal menu, too. \$\$

Finnegan’s River

401 SW 3rd Ave., 305-285-3030

Pool tables are expected in a sports bar and grill. But an actual pool? And a Jacuzzi? This Miami River hideaway has other surprises, too, on its extensive outdoor deck, including a boat dock and a large array of umbrella tables and lounge chairs where it’s easy to while away many happy hours. The menu is the same array of bar bites served by South Beach’s older Finnegan’s, but angus burgers are big and tasty, and zingy jalapeño-studded smoked-fish dip is a satisfying table-snack choice. \$\$

First Hong Kong Café

117 SE 2nd St., 305-808-6665

Old Hong Kong saying: If it walks, swims, crawls, or flies, it’s edible. And nowhere is this truer than in this historically international trade port’s “cafés” – meaning fast-food restaurants. Typical menus present hundreds of items that are local interpretations of dishes from all China, and most other nations. So believe us: At this café, whose head chef is from HK, the Indian-style curries, sambal-spiked Indonesian chow fun, even the borscht (a tomato/beef, not beet-based version of the Russian soup) are as authentic as the kung pao whatever, and as tasty. \$\$

Fratelli Milano

213 SE 1st St., 305-373-2300

Downtown isn’t yet a 24/7 urban center, but it’s experiencing a mini explosion of eateries open at night. That includes this family-owned ristorante, where even newcomers feel at home. At lunch it’s almost impossible to resist panini, served on focaccia or crunchy ciabatta; even the vegetarian version bursts with complex and complementary flavors. During weekday dinners, try generous plates of risotto with shrimp and grilled asparagus; homemade pastas like seafood-packed fettuccine alla scoglio; or delicate Vitello alla Milanese on arugula. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Garcia’s Seafood Grille and Fish Market

398 NW N. River Dr., 305-375-0765

Run by a fishing family for a couple of generations, this venerable Florida fish shack is the real thing. No worries about the seafood’s freshness; on their way to the dining deck overlooking the Miami River, diners can view the retail fish market. Best preparations are the simplest. When stone crabs are in season, Garcia’s claws are as good as Joe’s but considerably cheaper. The local fish sandwich is most popular – grouper, yellowtail snapper, or mahi mahi. \$\$\$

Giovana Caffè

154 SE 1st Ave.305-374-1024

If the menu at this charming downtown hideaway contained only one item – pear and gorgonzola ravioli dressed, not drowned, in sage-spiced cream sauce – we’d be happy. But the café, formerly lunch-only but now serving weekday dinners, is also justly famed for meal-size salads like grilled skirt steak atop sweetly balsamic-dressed spinach (with spinach, tomatoes, bacon, hard-boiled eggs, blue cheese, and almonds), or an especially lavish chicken salad with pine nuts, golden raisins, apples, and basil, an Italian twist. \$\$

Grimpa Steakhouse

901 Brickell Plaza, 305-455-4757

This expansive indoor/outdoor Brazilian eatery is sleekly contemporary, but no worries. The classic sword-wielding gauchos are here, serving a mind-reeling assortment of skewered beef, chicken, lamb, pork, sausages, and fish. And included in the price (dinner \$47, lunch \$34) is the traditional belly-busting buffet of hot and cold prepared foods, salad, cold cuts, and cheeses. A pleasant, nontraditional surprise: unusual sauces like sweet/tart passion fruit or mint, tomato-based BBQ, and mango chutney, along with the ubiquitous chimichurri. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$

Half Moon Empanadas

192 SE 1st Ave., 305-379-2525

As with South Beach’s original Half Moon, you can get wraps or salads. But it’s this snackery’s unique take on Argentine-style empanadas that makes it seem a natural for national franchising. The soft-crust, doughy crescents – baked, not fried, so relatively guilt-free – are amply stuffed with fillings both classic (beef and chicken, either mild or spicy) and creative: the bacon cheeseburger, the pancetta/mozzarella/plum-filled Americana, and several vegetarian options. At just over two bucks apiece, they’re a money-saving moveable feast. \$

Hawa Jade

1331 Brickell Bay Dr., 305-905-5523

When thinking “fusion” cuisines, Japanese and Lebanese don’t instantly spring to mind. But taking the medieval Spice Route connection as inspiration, the Hawa family makes the mix work at both its original Coral Gables Hawa and this new location in the Jade Residences. Golden Pockets (tofu crêpes encasing macadamias, avocado, and tuna, crab, shrimp, or Kobe-style beef) are musts. Plus there are unique combos containing makis plus substantial salads, like crunchy tuna enoki rolls with falafel salad – not the usual green garnish. Housemade desserts with a French twist are also a pleasant surprise. \$\$

Hibachi Grill

45 NE 3rd Ave., 305-374-2223

Imagine a mini-express Benihana. This place specializes in teppanyaki cuisine – minus the thrilling (or terrifying) tableside knife theatrics, true, but the one-plate meals of seasoned steak slices, chicken, shrimp, or salmon plus dipping sauces, fried rice, and an onion/zucchini mix come at bargain prices. There are also hefty soups or Japanese, Thai, and Singapore-style noodle and rice bowls loaded with veggies and choice of protein (including tofu). The limited sides are Japanese (shumai, plump chicken gyoza) and Chinese (various egg rolls). Fancy? No, but satisfying. \$\$\$

The Hoxton

1111 SW 1st Ave., 786-691-2730

Though inland (and reportedly inspired by old England), this urban beach bar/grill has the relaxing, refined-rustic ambiance of a classic New England hangout, and upscaled “down shore” food to match: Maine lobster rolls, on brioche rather than hot dog rolls; a luxe take on Québécoise poutine (from-scratch fries with Vermont cheddar and duck confit gravy); an especially lavish clam bake. Also appealingly different from the Miami norm: frequent live bands of many musical genres in the comfortable lounge area, plus almost spookily competent service. \$\$\$

Il Gabbiano

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

Its location at the mouth of the Miami River makes this upscale Italian spot (especially the outdoor terrace) the perfect power lunch/business dinner alternative to steakhouses. And the culinary experience goes way beyond the typical meat market, thanks in part to the flood of freebies that’s a trademark of Manhattan’s Il Mulino, originally run by Il Gabbiano’s owners. The rest of the food? Pricy, but portions are mammoth. And the champagne-cream-sauced housemade ravioli with black truffles? Worth every penny. \$\$\$\$\$

Jackson Soul Food

950 NW 3rd Ave., 305-377-6710]

With a recently refurbished exterior to match its classy/comfy retro interior, this 65-year-old Overtown soul food breakfast institution now has only one drawback: It closes at 1:00 p.m. Never mind, night owls. If you’re a first-timer here, order the astonishingly fluffy pancakes with juicy beef sausage, and you’ll set multiple alarm clocks to return. Classic drop biscuits (preferably with gravy) are also must-haves. And hearty Southern breakfast staples like smothered chicken wings or fried fish do make breakfast seem like lunch, too. \$

Jamón, Jamón, Jamón,

10 SW South River Dr., 305-324-1111

From the outside, you know you’re walking into the ground floor of a new condo building. But once inside the charmingly rustic room, you’d swear you’re in Spain. Obviously Spain’s famous cured hams are a specialty, as are other pork products on the weekly changing menu, from a roast suckling pig entrée to a fried chorizo and chickpea tapa. But seafood is also terrific. Don’t miss bacalao-filled piquillo peppers, or two of Miami’s best rice dishes: seafood paella and arroz negro (with squid and its ink). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kork Wine & Cheese Bar

2 S. Miami Ave., 305-377-8899

From the owner of Transit Lounge, a hip hangout long before the downtown/Brickell revival, this more upscale-cool venue is worth checking out for its almost medieval dimly lit décor alone, including a subterranean wine cellar/party room, formerly a WW II-era bomb shelter. Comestibles are limited to wine and cheese plus accompaniments. Both are available to go. Kork is as much market as lounge. But with a stock of roughly 5000 bottles, and a selection of roughly two dozen perfectly ripe artisanal cheeses – curated by a cheese sommelier who’ll create perfect pairings – who needs more? \$\$

Largo Bar & Grill

401 Biscayne Blvd., 305-374-9706

Sure, Bayside Marketplace is touristy. But it can be fun to spend a day playing visitor in your own city. If you do, this waterfront place overlooking Miamarina is a superior food choice. Expect nothing cutting edge, just tasty, familiar favorites solidly prepared. You won’t go wrong with stone crab claws and Cajun mustard dip; inauthentic but delicious fish tacos in hard blue corn tortillas with two sauces (cilantro and chipotle), generously portioned fish sandwiches (grouper, mahi, snapper, or daily catch), and festive cocktails. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

La Loggia Ristorante and Lounge

68 W. Flagler St., 305-373-4800

This luxuriantly neo-classical yet warm Italian restaurant was unquestionably a pioneer in revitalizing downtown. With alternatives like amaretto-tinged pumpkin agnolotti in sage butter sauce and cilantro-spiced white bean/vegetable salad dressed with truffle oil, proprietors Jennifer Porciello and Horatio Oliveira continue to draw a lunch crowd that returns for dinner, or perhaps just stays on through the afternoon, fueled by the Lawyer’s Liquid Lunch, a vodka martini spiked with sweetened espresso. \$\$\$

La Moon

144 SW 8th St., 305-860-6209

At four in the morning, nothing quells the munchies like a Crazy Burger, a Colombian take on a trucker’s burger: beef patty, bacon, ham, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato, and a fried egg, with an arepa corn pancake “bun.” While this tiny place’s late hours (till 6:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday) are surprising, the daytime menu is more so. In addition to Colombian classics, there’s

a salad Niçoise with grilled fresh tuna, seared salmon with mango salsa, and other yuppie favorites. \$\$\$

La Provence

1064 Brickell Ave. 786-425-9003

Great baguettes in the bread basket, many believe, indicate a great meal to come. But when Miamians encounter such bread – crackling crust outside; moist, aromatic, aerated interior – it’s likely not from a restaurant’s own kitchen, but from La Provence. Buttery croissants and party-perfect pastries are legend too. Not so familiar is the bakery’s café component, whose sandwich/salad menu reflects local eclectic tastes. But French items like pan bagnats (essentially salade Niçoise on artisan bread) will truly transport diners to co-owner David Thou’s Provençal homeland. \$\$

La Sandwicherie

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

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

Le Boudoir Brickell

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

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

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

1 W. Flagler St., Suite 7, 305-789-9929

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing.)

Little Lotus

25 N. Miami Ave. #107, 305-533-2700

Secreted inside the International Jewelry Exchange, this eatery (owned by stealth super-foodie Sari Maharani – paralegal by day, restaurateur by night) is tough to find but seems destined to become one of our town’s toughest tables to book. Two talented chefs, whose credits include Morimoto (NYC) and hometown fave Yakko-san, create Japanese, Indonesian, and fusion small plates that look remarkably artful and taste like they’re about ready to take on Iron Chef Morimoto himself. Saucing, often with multiple but balanced potions, is especially noteworthy. The prices? A steal. \$\$\$

Machiya

3252 NE 1st Ave. #116, 786-507-5025

Originally called Machiya Ramen Noodle House, this eatery changed its name – and really, the place is not so much a ramen joint as a contemporary izakaya (lounge featuring Japanese hot and cold small plates plus sushi), with a few added ramen bowls. Most of the menu is a mix of today’s popular favorites, like “Kobe” sliders, and unique inventions. Wildest: wasabi-spiced tuna pizza. Our faves: fatty salmon makis (lightly seared salmon belly with shrimp tempura, asparagus, and yuzu sauce); rich miso-braised short ribs; steam buns with rock shrimp and spicy aioli.

Miami Art Café

364 SE 1st St., 305-374-5117

For businessfolk on the go, this breakfast/lunch-only French café serves up evocative baguette sandwiches (like camembert) loaded, if you like, with greens, olives, and more. For those with time to sit, we’d recommend the savory crêpes, garnished with perfectly dressed salad, or sweet crêpe like the Bonne Maman (whose sugar/salted butter stuffing brings Brittany to downtown). And quiches are nicely sturdy. But there are surprises here, too, including just a few full entrées, with correctly made traditional sauces one wouldn’t expect at a luncheonette – except, perhaps, in Paris. \$\$\$

Miami’s Finest Caribbean Restaurant

236 NE 1st Ave., 305-381-9254

Originally from Jamaica, proprietor Miss Pat has been serving her traditional homemade island specialties to downtown office workers and college students since the early 1990s. Most popular item here might be the weekday lunch special of jerk chicken with festival (sweet-fried cornmeal bread patties), but even vegetarians are well served with dishes like a tofu, carrot, and chayote curry. All entrées come with rice and peas, fried plantains, and salad, so no one leaves hungry. \$

Mint Leaf

1063 SE 1st Ave., 305-358-5050

Part of London’s famous Woodlands Group, this stylish spot, like its Coral Gables parent, serves the sort of upscale Indian food rarely found outside Great Britain or India. More interestingly, the menu includes not just the familiar northern Indian “Mughlai” fare served in most of America’s Indian restaurants, but refined versions of south India’s scrumptious street food. We’ve happily assembled whole meals of the vegetarian chaat (snacks) alone. And dosai (lacy rice/lentil crepes rolled around fillings ranging from traditional onion/potato to lamb masala or spicy chicken) are so addictive they oughta be illegal. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Miss Yip Chinese Café

900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-358-0088

Fans of the South Beach original will find the décor different. Most notably, there’s an outdoor lounge, and more generally a nightclub atmosphere. But the menu of Hong Kong-style Chinese food, prepared by imported Chinese cooks, is familiar. Simple yet sophisticated Cantonese seafood dishes rock (try the lightly battered salt-and-pepper shrimp), as does orange peel chicken, spicy/tangy rather than overly sweet. And a single two-course Peking duck (skin in crepes, stir-fried meat and veggies with lettuce cups) makes mouthwatering finger food, shared among friends. \$\$\$

fish fish ALL DAY fish fish ALL NIGHT

LUNCH | MARKET | HAPPY HOUR | DINNER

LUNCH MENU

STARTERS

FRIED FRESH HAND CUT CALAMARI....9

With Chipotle Remoulade and Marinara Sauce

JUMBO SHRIMP COCKTAIL....14

With Our Classic Cocktail Sauce

ARTICHOKE & SPINACH DIP....9

Parmesan, Mozzarella and Cheddar Cheese
With Our House Made Tortilla Chips

PEEL & EAT SHRIMP....10

½ lb. Shrimp With Our Classic Cocktail Sauce

CEVICHE

Yellowtail Snapper....14 Grouper....16
Chilean Sea Bass....18 Ceviche Trio....24

SANDWICHES

Served with Hand Cut Steak Fries. Fish may be grilled,
blackened, fried or coconut fried

YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER SANDWICH....15

GROUPEr CLUB SANDWICH....15

Chipotle Remoulade, Applewood Smoked
Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato

FISH SANDWICH OF THE DAY....15

BUILD YOUR OWN 8 oz.
BLACK ANGUS BURGER....10
With Lettuce, Tomato, Onion

Add Avocado, Mozzarella, Goat, Cheddar,
Blue Cheese, Applewood Smoked Bacon, Grilled Onions,
Sautéed Mushrooms, 2 each

SALADS

Add Chicken 6, Shrimp 9, Seared Ahi Tuna 12
Salmon 10 Chilled ½ Maine Lobster MP

HOUSE SALAD....7

Mixed Greens, Grape Tomatoes and Cucumber
With Our House Made Balsamic Vinaigrette

BABY ARUGULA & GOAT CHEESE
SALAD....11

With Candied Pecans, Fresh Orange Slices, and
Our House Made Pear Vinaigrette

CLASSIC CAESAR SALAD....6/11

Hearts of Baby Romaine, House Made Caesar Dressing, Shaved
Reggiano Parmigiano Cheese and Crostini

DECONSTRUCTED GRILLED CAESAR
SALAD....14

Grilled Hearts of Romaine, House Made Caesar Dressing,
Anchovies, Shaved Reggiano Parmigiano and Crostini

SMALL PLATES

TEMPURA BATTERED ROCK SHRIMP....9

With Chipotle Remoulade

SUSHI GRADE TUNA TATAKI....16

With Ginger Wasabi Crème Fraiche

JUMBO COCONUT SHRIMP....9

With Our Tangy Mango Pineapple Sauce

JUMBO LUMP CRAB CAKE....12

Served With Greens and Lime Aioli

STEAMED MUSSELS OR CLAMS....9/16

In a White Wine Butter Sauce

SOUPS

CONCH CHOWDER....5/10

Classic Bahamian Style

NEW ENGLAND
CLAM CHOWDER....6/12

Chef Oscar's Secret Recipe

SOUP OF THE DAY....6/12

SOUP AND HALF SANDWICH....13

RAW BAR

Build Your Own Seafood Platter

COLD WATER OYSTERS & CLAMS

PEEL & EAT SHRIMP

CRAB

CEVICHE

CHILLED ½ MAINE LOBSTER

SPECIALTIES OF THE HOUSE

JUMBO SHRIMP SCAMPI LINGUINI....16

In a White Wine Garlic Butter Sauce

YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER FILET....19

In a Key Lime Butter Sauce Over
Over Basmati Rice and Sautéed Spinach

FISH & CHIPS....18

Day Boat Icelandic Cod with English Mushy Peas, Hand Cut
Steak Fries & House Made Tartar Sauce

SHRIMP & CHIPS....21

Hand Battered Jumbo Shrimp with English Mushy Peas, Hand
Cut Steak Fries & Our Lime Aioli



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Naoo

661 Brickell Key Dr., 305-947-6263
Chances are you've never had anything like the \$85 prix-fixe Japanese dinners at chef Kevin Cory's tiny but nationally acclaimed oasis, transplanted from its original Sunny Isles space with its supreme serenity intact. By reservation only, in two dinner seatings of just eight people each, and omakase (chef's choice) only, meals include a seasonal soup, a four-course bento box, eight pieces of sushi, and three desserts. Cory personally does everything for you, even applying the perfect amount of housemade artisan soy sauce mix and fresh-grated wasabi to each mind-reelingly fresh nigiri. Few eating experiences on earth are more luxuriant. \$\$\$-\$

neMesis Urban Bistro

1035 N. Miami Ave., 305-415-9911
Truly original restaurants are hard to find here, and harder to describe in standard sound bites. But they often are the attention-grabbing people-magnets that spark revivals of iffy neighborhoods. That's our prediction for this quickly decorated bistro, where the kitchen is helmed by *Top Chef* contestant Micah Edelstein. The intensely personal menu of creative dishes inspired by her global travels (plus her fascination with unfamiliar ingredients) changes constantly, but scrumptious signatures include South African smoked veal bobotie, and Peruvian pinoli pancakes with housemade chicken/apple sausage, hibiscus syrup, and maple granules. \$\$\$-\$

Novocento

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-403-0900
For those who think "Argentine cuisine" is a synonym for "beef and more beef," this popular eatery's wide range of more cosmopolitan contemporary Argentine fare will be a revelation. Classic parrilla-grilled steaks are here for traditionalists, but the menu is dominated by creative Nuevo Latino items like a new-style ceviche de chernia (lightly lime-marinated grouper with jalapeños, basil, and the refreshing sweet counterpoint of watermelon), or crab ravioli with creamy saffron sauce. Especially notable are the entrée salads. \$\$\$-\$

Oceanaire Seafood Room

900 S. Miami Ave., 305-372-8862
With a dozen branches nationwide, Oceanaire May seem more All-American seafood empire than Florida fish shack, but menus vary significantly according to regional tastes and fish. Here in Miami, chef Sean Bernal supplements signature starters like lump crab cakes with his own lightly marinated, Peruvian-style grouper ceviche. The daily-changing, 15-20 specimen seafood selection includes local fish seldom seen on local menus: pompano, parrot fish, amberjack. But even flown-in fish (and the raw bar's cold-water oysters) are ultra-fresh. \$\$\$

OTC

1250 S. Miami Ave. 305-374-4612
Over-the-counter service usually connotes the classic fast food "slider" experience: both greasburgers and patrons are in and out quickly. At this casually cool gastropub, the counter ordering system encourages the opposite feel, of comfie congeniality; it invites hanging out, just without the fuss of formal dining out – or the expense. Most plates are \$10 or under. Ingredient-driven dishes cover today's favorite food groups (various mac-and-cheeses, variously topped/seasoned fries, and more) with some unusual twists, like a scrumptiously lardon-laden frisée/goat cheese salad brightened by fresh peaches. Even the condiments are housemade. \$\$

Ozzi Sushi

200 SE 1st St., 786-704-8003
Since its 1958 invention, conveyor-belt sushi has been the most fun form of Japanese fast food, but problematic. Who knew how long plates had been circulating on the sushi-ground? Happily, this sushi-boat spot avoids sanitation issues with clear plastic covers, and as for freshness, low prices ensure a steady stream of diners grabbing makis, nigiri, and more as they float by. Highlights include glistening ikura (salmon roe) in a thin-sliced cucumber cup, a sweet-sauced mango/guava/crab roll, and a festively frosted strawberry Nutella dessert maki. \$\$\$

Pasha's

1414 Brickell Ave., 305-416-5116
The original branch on Lincoln Road was instantly popular, and the same healthy Middle Eastern fast food is served at several newer outlets. The prices are low enough that you might suspect Pasha's was a tax write-off rather than a Harvard Business School project, which it was by founders Antonio Ellek and Nicolas Cortes. Dishes range from falafel and gyros

to more unusual items like muhammara (tangy walnut spread) and silky labneh yogurt cheese. Everything from pitas to lemonade is made fresh, from scratch, daily. \$\$\$

Pega Grill

15 E. Flagler St., 305-808-6666
From Thanasios Barlos, a Greek native who formerly owned North Beach's Ariston, this small spot is more casually contemporary and less ethnic-kitschy in ambiance, but serves equally authentic, full-flavored Greek food. Mixed lamb/beef gyros (chicken is also an option), topped with tangy yogurt sauce and wrapped, with greens and tomatoes, in fat warm pita bread, are specialties. But even more irresistible is the taramasalata (particularly velvety and light carp roe dip), available alone or on an olive/pita-garnished mixed meze platter. \$\$

Peoples Bar-B-Que

360 NW 8th St., 305-373-8080
Oak-smoked, falling-off-the-bone tender barbecued ribs (enhanced with a secret sauce whose recipe goes back several generations) are the main draw at this Overtown institution. But the chicken is also a winner, plus there's a full menu of soul food entrées, including what many aficionados consider our town's tastiest souse. And it would be unthinkable to call it quits without homemade sweet potato pie or banana pudding, plus a bracing flop – half iced tea, half lemonade. \$\$\$

Perricone's

15 SE 10th St., 305-374-9449
Housed in a Revolutionary-era barn (moved from Vermont), this market/café was one of the Brickell area's first gentrified amenities. At lunch chicken salad is a favorite; dinner's strong suit is the pasta list, ranging from Grandma Jennie's old-fashioned lasagna to chichi fiocchi purses filled with fresh pear and gorgonzola. And Sunday's \$15.95 brunch buffet (\$9.95 for kids) – featuring an omelet station, waffles, smoked salmon and bagels, salads, and more – remains one of our town's most civilized all-you-can-eat deals. \$\$

Pieducks

1451 S. Miami Ave., 305-808-7888
If you can overlook a name as unenlightening as most in-jokes (it evidently refers to a favorite character of owner Claudio Nunez's kids – we assume the Pokemon Psyduck), you'll experience pretty perfect pizza. Sadly, not all brick ovens turn out perfectly char-blistered crusts, crisp outside and airy/chewy inside, but that's what you'll consistently find here and a newer take-out/delivery-only Midtown branch. And unlike many artisan pizzerias, Pieducks doesn't get cheesy with cheese quantity (though we like that extra cheese is an option). Elaborate salads complete the menu. \$\$

Pier 94

94 SE 1st St., 305-379-5652
Tucked into "The Village," a collection of courtyard eateries far from any waterfront, this ceviche bar specializes in fresh seafood dishes from chef/owner Alex Del Corral's native Peru, but also features famous Peruvian meat and poultry dishes (including a refined aji de gallina, chicken in aji pepper-spiced cream sauce). Emphasis is particularly strong on Peru's penchant for fusion food, including traditional Chifa (Chinese-Peruvian) rice or noodle stir-fries. But the chef also fuses classic and creative influences. Try contemporary causas, combining Peru's favorite starch, potatoes, with unique new sauces. \$\$

Thea Pizzeria-Café

1951 NW 7th Ave., 305-777-3777
Just over the border from artsy Wynwood, this ultra-cool café (whose interior features a 30-foot Italian glass floor mosaic) isn't what you'd expect to find inside one of the medical/lab buildings in Miami's sterile "Health District." But the owner is Thea Goldman, former founding partner of Wynwood's pioneering restolaunge Joey's, which explains both the stylishness and the menu, highlighted by imaginative wood-oven designer pizzas, plus artisan charcuterie/cheese platters, creative salads, and housemade salted caramel gelato. Not your typical hospital food. Call ahead regarding dinner. At this writing, it's being served Fridays only. \$\$\$

Pizzarium

69 E. Flagler St., 305-381-6025
Roman-style rectangular pizzas, served in square slices, have been available in the Miami area since the mid-1990s. But the familiar squares and Pizzarium's are similar only in shape. Main difference: dough, here allowed to rise for four days. The resulting crusts are astonishingly airy, as authentic Roman slices, intended as light street snacks, should be. Toppings, a rotating selection of nearly 30 combinations, are highlighted by

quality imported ingredients – not to mention a healthy imagination, as the zucca gialla attests: pumpkin cream, pancetta, smoked scamorza cheese. \$

Pollos & Jarras

115 NE 3rd Ave., 786-567-4940
From Juan Chipoco, Peruvian chef/co-owner of seafood-centric Cvi.Che .105, this stylish but affordable two-level restaurant is centered around pollo a la brasa, as a huge rotisserie oven attests. Grilled steaks, unique sandwiches, anticuchos, and varied starters and sides are also served, but the must-not-miss is rotisserie chicken, marinated in roughly a dozen-and-a-half seasonings before a self-basting spin on the spit cooks it to incomparable juiciness. It's served with crisp fries and a substantial salad. Meals also come with a complimentary cup of aguadito – assertively cilantro-spiked chicken rice soup. \$\$

Porketta

43 NE 3rd Ave., 305-372-0034
Warm, juicy, served with succulent pieces of crisp crackling, herb-stuffed Italian porchetta (pronounced "porketta") roast, at its best, is hard to find even in much of Italy except during festivals. But every day is a festival here, where the real thing (not the dry dell-style pork roll slices that often pass for porchetta) is featured on a plate with broccoli rabe and cannellini; in the hefty Bombardino sandwich; or in three mini-sandwiches, convenient for sampling the place's three sauces. Several salads and carpaccios placate porkophobes. \$\$\$

Prelude

**Adrienne Arsh Center
1300 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-6722**
Though the opening of Barton G.'s elegant performing arts center eatery did feature a live giraffe, the food's actually more grown-up than at his original SoBe spot. The concept is prix fixe: Any three courses on the menu (meaning three entrées if you want) for \$39. Highlights include silky, tarragon-inflected corn/bacon chowder, beautifully plated beef carpaccio with horseradish/mustard and shallot olive oil dipping sauces; and over-the-top playhouse desserts, one with a luscious crème fraiche ice cream pop. \$\$\$

Raja's Indian Cuisine

33 NE 2nd Ave., 305-539-9551
Despite its small size and décor best described as "none," this place is an institution thanks to south Indian specialties rarely found in Miami's basically north Indian restaurants. The steam-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 utappam, thicker pancakes, layered with onions and chilis, both served with sambar and chutney. \$\$

Reggae Tacos

93 SE 2nd St., 786-425-9558
For diners on the go, who want food fast but not typical fast food, this place's Mexican-Jamaican fusion specialties are ideal. Taco or burrito shells encase inventive jerk pork (with mango, pickled onions, and cabbage), scotch-bonnet beef with avocado/cheddar salsa, vinegar/spice-marinated escovitch veggies, curried goat, and other island dishes that are normally plated entrées, transforming them into playful portable packages. And do save some stomach space for deep-fried "festival," sinfully scrumptious cornmeal mini-doughnuts sweetened with both vanilla-spiked honey and powdered sugar. \$

Rincon Escondido

2697 Biscayne Blvd., 305-438-9300
On a quick drive-by, this eatery surrounded by still-ungentrified storefronts rather resembles a hole-in-the-wall Latin cafeteria. Inside, though, the look is rustic-chic, and the menu features some of Miami's most refined traditional or creative Spanish tapas. We love the open-faced sandwiches, particularly montaditos de boquerones (with fresh anchovies and brunoised veggies). Traditionalists will find patatas bravas satisfyingly spicy; braver experimenters should try bombas de queso (fried cheese balls with sweet orange blossom sauce), actually alarming in name only. \$\$\$

The River Oyster Bar

650 S. Miami Ave., 305-530-1915
This casually cool jewel is a full-service seafood spot, as evidenced by tempting menu selections like soft-shell crabs with grilled vegetables, corn relish, and remoulade. There are even a few dishes to please meat-and-potatoes diners, like short ribs with macaroni and cheese. But oyster fans will find it difficult to resist stuffing themselves silly on the unusually large selection, especially since oysters are served both raw and cooked – fire-roasted with sofrito butter, chorizo, and manchego. There's also a thoughtful wine list and numerous artisan beers on tap. \$\$\$

Rosa Mexicano

900 S. Miami Ave., 786-425-1001
This expansive indoor/outdoor space offers a dining experience that's haute in everything but price. Few entrées top \$20. The décor is both date-worthy and family-friendly – festive but not kitschy. And nonsophisticates needn't fear; though nachos aren't available, there is nothing scary about zarape de pato (roast duck between fresh-made, soft corn tortillas, topped with yellow-and-habanero-pepper cream sauce), or Rosa's signature guacamole en molcajete, made tableside. A few pomegranate margaritas ensure no worries. \$\$\$

Scalina

315 S. Biscayne Blvd., 305-789-9933
Comparisons between this new Tom Billante venture and the other (slightly pricier) Italian eatery in the same building are inevitable, especially considering similarities like key personnel from NYC's Il Mulino, Mulino-style abundant free appetizers, and a power-dining crowd. But why focus on competitive nonsense when you can relax on the river-view terrace enjoying chef Enrico Giraldo's specialties, including an elaborate take on Venice's famed fegato (calf's liver and onions), upscaled with Lucanica sausage and a balsamic reduction. Or maybe an even more evocative Roman ice cream tartufo? Mangia! \$\$\$

Soya & Pomodoro

120 NE 1st St., 305-381-9511
Life is complicated. Food should be simple. That's owner Armando Alfano's philosophy, which is stated above the entry to his atmospheric downtown eatery. And since it's also the formula for the truest traditional Italian food (Alfano hails from Pompeii), it's fitting that the menu is dominated by authentically straightforward yet sophisticated Italian entrées. There are salads and sandwiches, too. The most enjoyable place to dine is the secret, open-air courtyard. Alfano serves dinner on Thursdays only to accompany local musicians and artists. \$\$\$

Sparky's Roadside Restaurant & Bar

204 NE 1st St., 305-377-2877
This cowboy-cute eatery's chefs/owners (one CIA-trained, both BBQ fanatics nicknamed Sparky) eschew regional purism, instead utilizing a hickory/apple-wood-stoked rotisserie smoker to turn out their personalized style of slow-cooked, complexly dry-rub fusion: ribs, chopped pork, brisket, and chicken. Diners can customize their orders with mix-and-match housemade sauces: sweet/tangy tomato-based, Carolinas-inspired vinegar/mustard, pan-Asian hoisin with lemongrass and ginger, tropical guava/habanero. Authenticity aside, the quality of the food is as good as much higher-priced barbecue outfits. \$\$\$

Sushi Maki

1000 S. Miami Ave., 305-415-9779
Fans of the popular parent Sushi Maki in the Gables will find many familiar favorites on this Brickell branch's menu. But the must-haves are some inventive new dishes introduced to honor the eatery's tenth anniversary – and Miami multiculturalism: "sushi tacos" (fried gyzo skins with fusion fillings like raw salmon, miso, chili-garlic sauce, and sour cream), three tasty flash-marinated Asian/Latin tiraditos; addictive rock shrimp tempura with creamy/spicy dip. Also irresistible: four festive new sake cocktails. \$\$\$

SuViche

49 SW 11th St., 305-960-7097
This small Japanese-Peruvian place serves food influenced by each nation distinctly, plus intriguing fusion items with added Caribbean touches. Cooked entrées, all Peruvian, include an elegant aji de gallina (walnut-garnished chicken and potatoes in peppery cream sauce). But the emphasis is on contemporary ceviches/tiraditos (those with velvety aji amarillo chili sauce particularly), plus huge exotic sushi rolls, which get pretty wild. When was the last time you encountered a tempura-battered tuna, avocado, and scallion maki topped with Peru's traditional potato garnish, huancaina cheese sauce? \$\$\$

TIKL Raw Bar & Grill

1450 Brickell Ave. #110, 305-372-0620
From restaurateur Claudio Giordano and chef Simon Stojanovic, the team behind longtime South Beach seafood favorite Altamare, this eatery is similar in food genre (contemporary American), though more global influences, especially from Asia, are evident here. Additionally, rather than serving conventional three-course meals, TIKL's menu focuses on small plates: creative crudos (like hamachi with yuzu, wasabi, and olive oil powder), plus robata-grilled and otherwise cooked items. Standouts: garlic/citrus-spiked local white shrimp with sweet shishito peppers; Thai curried mussels with crisped sushi rice; sinful bacon toast. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Tobacco Road

626 S. Miami Ave., 305-374-1198

Prohibition-era speakeasy (reputedly a fave of Al Capone), gay bar, strip club. Previously all these, this gritty spot has been best known since 1982 as a venue for live music, primarily blues. But it also offers food from lunchtime to late night (on weekends till 4:00 a.m.). The kitchen is especially known for its chill, budget-priced steaks, and burgers. There's also surprisingly elegant fare, though, like a Norwegian salmon club with lemon aioli. A meat-smoker in back turns out tasty ribs. \$\$

Top Burger

109 NE 1st St., 305-379-3100

Inside this "better burger" spot, décor is so charmingly 1950s retro you almost expect to find the Fonz leaning on a jukebox. What you actually find: hand-formed, hormone-free, 100% Angus patties (or alternatives like veggie burgers, a lightly-breaded chicken Milanese, and all-beef hot dogs) on toasted buns, with fresh-cut French or sweet potato fries. Welcome surprises include an assertively spicy/tangy BBQ-like secret sauce; prices that, while not 1950s level, rival those at junk-food joints; and old-school service – the kind that comes with a smile. \$

Toro Toro

100 Chopin Plaza, 305-372-4710

Back before Miami's business district had any "there" there, the InterContinental's original restaurant was an executive lunch/dinner destination mainly by default. This replacement, from restaurant empire-builder Richard Sandoval, brings downtown power dining into this decade. As the name suggests, you can go bullish with steakhouse fare, including an abbreviated (in variety, not quantity) "rodizio experience." But the place's strongest suit is its pan-Latin small plates – upscaled refinements of classic favorites: crisp corn arepas with short rib, guacamole, and crema fresca; fluffier cachapas pancakes with tomato jam; more. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Trapiche Room

1109 Brickell Ave., 305-329-3656

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

Tre Italian Bistro

270 E. Flagler St., 305-373-3303

"Bistro" actually sounds too Old World for this cool hangout, from the owners of downtown old-timer La Loggia, but "resto-lounge" sounds too glitzy. Think of it as a neighborhood "bistro-lounge." The food is mostly modernized Italian, with Latin and Asian accents: a prosciutto-and-fig pizza with Brazilian catupiry cheese; gnocchi served either as finger food (fried, with calamata olive/truffle aioli), or plated with orange-ginger sauce. But there are tomato-sauced meatballs with r'gawf for Grandpa Vinnie, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Truluck's Seafood, Steak, and Crabhouse

777 Brickell Ave., 305-579-0035

Compared to other restaurants with such an upscale power-lunch/dinner setting, most prices are quite affordable here, especially if you stick to the Miami Spice-priced date-dinner menu, or happy hour, when seafood items like crab-cake "sliders" are half price. Most impressive, though, are seasonal stone crabs (from Truluck's own fisheries, and way less expensive than Joe's) and other seafood that, during several visits, never tasted less than impeccably fresh, plus that greatest of Miami restaurant rarities: informed and gracious service. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Tuyo

415 NE 2nd St., 305-237-3200

Atop the revolutionary Miami Culinary Institute, this upscale eatery, unlike the café downstairs, isn't student-run. Rather it's designed to showcase school ideals – including sustainability as well as definitive Miami cuisine. The changing menu, from a culinary Dream Team headed by "New World Cuisine" inventor/MCI instructor Norman Van Aken (plus former protégés Jeffrey Brana and Travis Starwalt), mixes citrus-inflected creamy conch chowder and other pioneering signatures with new inventions like mind-reelingly multidimensional oyster pan stew, or tartare of tuna and burstingly ripe tomato topped with a delicate sous vide egg. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Waxy O'Connor's

690 SW 1st Ct., 786-871-7660

While the menu of this casually *craic* (Gaelic for "fun") Irish pub will be familiar to fans of the South Beach Waxy's, the location is far superior – on the Miami River, with waterfront deck. And none of Miami's Irish eateries offers as much authentic traditional fare. Especially evocative: imported oak-smoked Irish salmon with housemade brown bread; puff-pastry-wrapped Irish sausage rolls; lunchtime's imported Irish bacon or banger "butty" sandwiches on crusty baguettes, served with hand-cut fries, the latter particularly terrific dipped in Waxy's curry sauce. \$\$

Wok Town

119 SE 1st Ave., 305-371-9993

Judging from the takeout window, the minimalist décor (with communal seating), and predominance of American veggies on the menu, this Asian fast-food eatery, owned by Shai Ben-Ami (a Miss Yip and Domo Japanese veteran) May initially seem akin to those airport Oriental steam tables. Wrong. Custom-cooked by Chinese chefs, starters (like soy/garlic-coated edamame), salads, and have-it-your-way stir-fries, fried rice, or noodle bowls burst with bold, fresh flavor. The proci: a startlingly savory miso beef salad, with sesame/ginger/scallion dressing. Bubble tea, too! \$\$

Zuma

270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, 305-577-0277

This Miami River restolounge has a London parent on San Pellegrino's list of the world's best restaurants, and a similar menu of world-class, Izakaya-style smallish plates (robata-grilled items, sushi, much more) meant for sharing over drinks. Suffice to say that it would take maybe a dozen visits to work your way through the voluminous menu, which offers ample temptations for vegetarians as well as carnivores. Our favorite is the melt-in-your-mouth pork belly with yuzu/mustard miso dip, but even the exquisitely-garnished tofu rocks. \$\$\$

Midtown / Wynwood / Design District

3 Chefs Chinese Restaurant

1800 Biscayne Blvd. #105, 305-373-2688

Until this eatery opened in late 2010, the solid Chinese restaurants in this neighborhood could be counted on the fingers of no hands. So it's not surprising that most people concentrate on Chinese and Chinese/American fare. The real surprise is the remarkably tasty, budget-priced, Vietnamese fare. Try pho, 12 varieties of full-flavored beef/rice noodle soup (including our favorite, with well-done flank steak and flash-cooked eye round). All can be customized with sprouts and fresh herbs. Also impressive: Noodle combination plates with sautéed meats, salad, and spring rolls. \$\$

Acme Bakery & Coffee

3451 NE 1st Ave. #103, 786-507-5799

From Pious Pig Restaurant Group (whose other ventures include Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea! and the creative/rustic Federal Food, Drink & Provisions), this cozy bakery/café is, again, just what its neighborhood needed. The specialty is homemade artisan breads, from Colonial-era Sally Lun to crusty sourdough made with wild midtown Miami yeasts; these honest loaves make the place's breakfasts, served all day, and lunchtime's sandwiches (like meatloaf and cheddar with onion marmalade) superior. Coffee is single-origin stuff from Wynwood's Panther. Also available: gift baskets featuring housemade preserves and pickles. \$\$

Adelita's Café

2699 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-1262

From the street (which is actually NE 26th, not Biscayne) this Honduran restaurant seems unpromising, but inside it's bigger, better, and busier than it looks. Unlike many Latin American eateries, this one sticks close to the source and proves a crowd-pleaser. On weekends especially, the dining rooms are packed with families enjoying authentic fare like baleadas (thick corn tacos), tajadas (Honduras's take on tostones), rich meal-in-a-bowl soups packed with seafood or meat and veggies, and more. \$

B Sweet

20 NE 41st St., 305-918-4453

At this homey neighborhood jewel, located in a former apartment building, husband/wife team Tom Worhach and Karina Gimenez serve up warm welcomes and playfully inventive breakfast, lunch, and snack fare: bacon-wrapped egg and cheese cups; pressed Philly steak panini; an elegant yuzu-dressed smoked salmon, grapefruit, avocado, and arugula

slab. But the must-eats are sweets, housemade by Worhach, formerly executive pastry chef at the Mansion at Turtle Creek and similar gourmet palaces. One bite of his decadent yet impossibly light white-and-dark chocolate mousse cake will hook you for life. \$-\$\$

Basani's

3221 NE 2nd Ave., 786-925-0911

Despite this tiny place's modern décor, the family-run ambience and Italian-American comfort food evoke the neighborhood red-sauce joints that were our favored hangouts growing up in NJ's Sopranos territory. And low prices make it possible to hang out here frequently. Pizzas with hand-tossed crusts, not wood-oven but resembling honest bread, for less than fast food pizzeria prices? It's an offer you don't refuse. Don't refuse garlic rolls, either, or sinful zeppole (fried dough) for dessert. There's more complex fare, like chicken à la Francese, too. And they deliver. \$\$

Bengal

2010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-403-1976

At this Indian eatery the décor is cool and contemporary: muted gray and earth-tone walls, tasteful burgundy banquettes. And the menu touts "Modern Indian Cuisine" to match the look. Classicists, however, needn't worry. America's favorite familiar north Indian flavors are here, though dishes are generally more mildly spiced and presented with modern flair. All meats are certified halal, Islam's version of kosher – which doesn't mean that observant orthodox Jews can eat here, but Muslims can. \$\$\$

Best Friends

4770 Biscayne Blvd., 786-439-3999

On a restaurant-starved stretch of Biscayne Boulevard, this spot serves the same sort of simple but satisfying Italian fare (antipasti, soups, salads, pizzas) as its older sibling, South Miami's Blu Pizzeria, plus burgers. The thin-crust, pliable pizzas, though lacking burn blisters, are brick-oven cooked, as are "blues," unusual calzones (like the blu oceano, fatly filled with mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, and fresh tomatoes). Hefty half-pound burgers come similarly stuffed rather than topped. A sheltered patio and full bar make the place a pleasant neighborhood lounge, too. \$\$

Bin No. 18

1800 Biscayne Blvd., 786-235-7575

At this wine bar/café, the décor is a stylish mix of contemporary (high loft ceilings) and Old World (tables made from wine barrels). Cuisine is similarly geared to the area's smart new residents: creative sandwiches and salads at lunch, tapas and larger internationally themed Spanish, Italian, or French charcuterie platters at night. Though the place is small and family-run friendly, chef Alfredo Patino offers sophisticated snacks like the figciutto: arugula, gorgonzola dolce, caramelized onions, pine nuts, fresh figs, and prosciutto. Free parking behind the building. \$\$

Bloom

2751 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5443

Miami's most innovative art district is the perfect setting for this hip hangout, whose mad-genius menu proves that food is indeed one of the creative arts. Reinvented Latin/Asian street foods from chef Ricky Sauri (ex-Nobu) include spicy Spam-topped rice cakes; tuna tartare in seaweed "tacos"; a reina pepiada arepa, whose traditional mild chicken filling is replaced by shredded duck, avocado, tangy-sweet tamarind sauce, and Japanese mayo; an especially elegant Korean bibimbap; a vegan shitake-pumpkin tamale with nutty, cheesy natto sauce. For liquid art aficionados: cocktails like the eye-popping Tequila Beets (featuring roasted beet juice). \$\$\$

Buena Vista Bistro

4582 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-5909

If a neighborhood eatery like this one – which serves supremely satisfying bistro food – were within walking distance of every Miami resident, we'd be a helluva hip food town. Like true Parisian bistros, it's open continuously, every day, with prices so low that you can drop in anytime for authentic rillettes (a rustic pâté) with a crusty baguette, steak with from-scratch frites, salmon atop ratatouille, or many changing blackboard specials. Portions are plentiful. So is free parking. \$\$

Buena Vista Deli

4590 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-3945

At this casual café/bakery, co-owned by Buena Vista Bistro's Claude Postel, the day starts in authentic French fashion, with fresh breakfast breads, chocolate almond croissants, and

other delights. At lunch cornichon-garnished baguette sandwiches (containing housemade pâtés, sinfully rich pork rillettes, superb salami, and other charcuterie classics) are irresistible, and a buttery-crust, custardy quiche plus perfectly dressed salad costs little more than a fast-food combo meal. As for Postel's homemade French sweets, if you grab the last Paris-Brest, a praline butter-cream-filled puff pastry, we may have to kill you. \$-\$\$

Cafeina

297 NW 23rd St., 305-438-0792

This elegantly comfortable multi-room indoor/outdoor venue is described as an "art gallery/lounge," and some do come just for cocktails like the hefty café con leche martinis. But don't overlook chef Guily Booth's 12-item menu of very tasty tapas. The signature item is a truly jumbo-lump crab cake with no 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 antichoux, so buttery-rich we nearly passed out with pleasure. \$\$

Catch Grill & Bar

1633 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-536-6414

A location within easy walking distance of the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, in the extensively renovated Marriott Biscayne Bay, makes this casual-chic eatery, whose specialty is local and sustainable seafood, a great option for pre-show bites. Then again, enjoying lures like sweet-glazed crispy shrimp with friends on the outdoor, bayfront terrace is entertainment enough. It's worth calling to ask if the daily catch is wreckfish, a sustainable local that tastes like a cross between grouper and sea bass. Bonus: With validation, valet parking is free. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Cerviceria 100 Montaditos

3252 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-921-4373

Student budget prices, indeed. A first-grader's allowance would cover a meal at this first U.S. branch of a popular Spanish chain. The 100 mini sandwiches (on crusty, olive oil-drizzled baguettes) vary from \$1 to \$2.50, depending not on ingredient quality but complexity. A buck scores genuine Serrano ham, while top-ticket fillings add imported Iberico cheese, pulled pork, and tomato to the cured-ham slivers. Other options revolve around pâtés, smoked salmon, shrimp, and similar elegant stuff. There's cheap draft beer, too, plus nonsandwich snacks. \$\$

City Hall the Restaurant

2004 Biscayne Blvd. 305-764-3130

After 30+ years spent guiding other owners' restaurants to success, Miami Spice program creator Steve Haas has opened his own expansive, two-floor place, on a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard that's suddenly looking fashionable. The vibe is a mix of power-dining destination and comfie neighborhood hangout, and chef Tom Azar (ex-Emeril's) has designed a varied menu to match. Highlights: an astonishingly thin/crunchy-crust pizza topped with duck confit, wild mushrooms, port wine syrup, and subtly truffled béchamel; crispy calamari (rings and legs) with light, lemony tomato emulsion; and tuna tartar that is refreshingly free of sesame oil. Big portions and a full bar to boot. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Cheese Course

3451 NE 1st Ave.

786-220-6681

Not so much a restaurant as an artisanal cheese shop with complimentary prepared foods, this place's self-service café component nevertheless became an instant hit. Impeccable ingredients and inspired combinations make even the simplest salads and sandwiches unique – like bacon and egg, elevated by hand-crafted cream cheese, roasted red peppers, avocado, and chipotle Mayo. Cheese platters are exceptional, and customized for flavor preference from mild to bold, and accompanied by appropriate fruits, veggies, nuts, olives, prepared spreads, and breads. \$\$

Clive's Café

2818 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-0277

Some still come for the inexpensive, hearty American breakfasts and lunches that this homey hole-in-the-wall has served for more than 30 years. Since about 1990, though, when owner Pearlina Murray ("Ms. Pearl" to regulars) and cook Gloria Chin began emphasizing their native Jamaican specialties, the intensely spiced jerk chicken has been the main item here. Other favorites: savory rice and pigeon peas; eye-opening onion/vinegar-flavored escovitch fish; sweet plantains; and cabbage that redefines the vegetable. \$

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Tuesday.....	\$7.99
Bacon Omelette served with Homefries or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	
Wednesday.....	\$8.50
Eggwhite Vegetable Omelette served with sliced Tomatoes or Grits or Oatmeal. Choice of Bagel or Toast	
Thursday.....	\$8.99
Short Stack Pancakes, 2 Eggs, 3 strips of Bacon or 2 Sausage Links.	
Friday.....	\$9.50
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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Crumb on Parchment

3930 NE 2nd Ave., 305-572-9444

Though located in a difficult spot (the Melin Building's central atrium, invisible from the street), Michelle Bernstein's bakery/café packs 'em in, partly due to Bernstein's mom Martha, who makes irresistible old-school cakes: German chocolate with walnuts, lemon curd with buttercream frosting, more. Lunch fare includes inspired sandwiches like seared rare tuna with spicy Asian pickles and kimchi aioli. And for morning people, the savory chicken sausage, melted cheddar, kale, and shallot sandwich on challah will convince you that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. \$-\$\$

The Daily Creative Food Co.

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-573-4535

While the food formula of this contemporary café is familiar – sandwiches, salads, soups, breakfast food, and pastries, plus coffee and fruit drinks – a creative concept differentiates the place. Signature sandwiches are named after national and local newspapers, including Biscayne Times, giving diners something to chat about. Sandwiches and salads can also be do-it-yourself projects, with an unusually wide choice of main ingredients, garnishes, breads, and condiments for the creatively minded. \$

El Bajareque

278 NW 36th St., 305-576-5170

Dozens of little Latin American eateries, all looking almost identically iffy, line 36th Street. But this family-owned "bajareque" (shack) is one where you definitely want to stop for some of Miami's most tasty, and inexpensive, Puerto Rican home cooking, from mondongo (an allegedly hangover-curing soup) to mofongo, a plantain/chicharron mash with varied toppings plus garlicky mojo. Housemade snacks are irresistible, too, and great take-out party fare: pork-studded pasteles, similar to Cuban tamales but with a tuber rather than corn masa dough, or empanadas with savory shrimp stuffing. \$

Egg & Dart

4029 N. Miami Ave., 786-431-1022

While co-owners Costa Grillas (from Maria's, a Coral Gables staple) and Niko Theodorou (whose family members have several Greek islands restaurants) describe their cuisine as "rustic Greek," there is surprising sophistication in some dishes: an especially delicate taramasalata (cod roe dip); precisely crisp-fried smelts (like a freshwater sardine); galactobourico, an often heavy and cloyingly vanilla-saturated dessert, here custardy and enlivened by orange flavor. Extensive lists of mezze (snacks) and creative cocktails make the expansive, invitingly decorated space ideal for large gatherings of friends who enjoy sharing. \$\$\$

Egyptian Pizza Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-571-9050

Pizza, pita – hey, they're both flatbreads. So while many pizzas do indeed, as this halal place's name suggests, have

initially weird-seeming Middle Eastern toppings, it's really not surprising that the Giza (topped with marinated lamb, feta, olives, peppers, and pungently spiced cumin sauce) works at least as well as Italian classics. Additionally the menu includes interesting Middle Eastern fare like fowl, a hummus-like but lighter Egyptian dish of fava, tahini, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil. A brick oven makes both pizzas and homemade pitas superior. \$\$

The Embassy

4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-8446

Don't come to this embassy for passports. The name is short for "Embassy of Well-being and Debauchery." You will, however, feel transported to Spain's gourmet capital, San Sebastian, after sampling ambassador Alan Hughes's cunning pintxos (complexly layered Basque-style tapas). From a self-serve bar, choose from a changing selection of skewered stacks; brie, homemade fig jam, and twizzles of silky jamon Serrano; roast tomato, goat cheese, and anchovies on buttery garlic toast; many more. Small plates, to-die-for desserts like floating island with lychees, and weekend brunch items demonstrate similar mad-chef skills. \$-\$\$\$

18th Street Café

210 NE 18th St., 305-381-8006

Most seating in this cool, pioneering neighborhood café is in a giant bay window, backed with banquettes, that makes the small space feel expansive – fitting, since the menu keeps expanding, too. Originally breakfast/lunch only, the café, though closed weekends, now serves dinner till 10:00 p.m., with comfort food entrées like secret-recipe meatloaf joining old favorites: daily-changing homemade soups, varied burgers, layered international salads, inspired sandwiches (like roast beef and provolone with creamy horseradish). Beer and wine is available, and now so is delivery. \$\$

Five Guys Famous Burger and Fries

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Ave., 305-571-8341

No green-leaf faux health food here. You get what the name says, period, with three adds: kosher dogs, veggie burgers, and free peanuts while you wait. Which you will, just a bit, since burgers are made fresh upon order. Available in double or one-patty sizes, they're well-done but spurtingly juicy, and after loading with your choice of free garnishes, even a "little" burger makes a major meal. Fries (regular or Cajun-spiced) are also superior, hand-cut in-house from sourced potatoes. \$

George's Kitchen & The Loft

3404 N. Miami Ave., 305-438-9199

Veteran Miami restaurateur George-Eric Farge raises the sophistication bar at his new two-story restaurant/lounge. But the real star is Michelin-starred chef Steven Rojas, who combines French technique and personal creativity for dishes like Idiazabal cheese churros with romesco sauce, a green pea pot de crème "jar" with bacon marmalade (accompanied by butter-fried baguette slices for spreading), soy-glazed hamachi crudo

with ginger gelee, and caper-sprinkled short rib tartare, the meat's richness cheekily upped by poached bone marrow and caviar. Brunch and lunch items are equally ingenious. \$\$\$

Gigi

3470 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-1520

As befits its location in artful, working-class Wynwood, Gigi has minimalist modern diner ambiance paired with truly creative contemporary Asian-influenced comfort food from Top Chef contender Jeff McInnis (formerly of the South Beach Ritz-Carlton) at surprisingly low prices. From a menu encompassing noodle and rice bowls, steam-bun ssams, grilled goodies, and raw items, highlights include pillow-light roast pork-stuffed buns, and possibly the world's best BLT, featuring Asian bun "toast," thick pork belly slices rather than bacon, and house-made pickles. There's \$2 beer, too. \$-\$\$

Harry's Pizzeria

3918 N. Miami Ave., 786-275-4963

In this humble space (formerly Pizza Volante) are many key components from Michael's Genuine Food & Drink two blocks east – local/sustainable produce and artisan products; wood-oven cooking; homemade everything (including the ketchup accompanying crisp-outside, custardy-inside polenta fries, a circa 1995 Michael Schwartz signature snack from Nemo). Beautifully blistered, ultra-thin-crust pizzas range from classic Margheritas to pies with house-smoked bacon, trugole (a subtly flavorful – fruity, not funky – Alpine cheese), and other unique toppings. Rounding things out: simple but ingenious salads, ultimate zeppoles, and Florida craft beers. \$\$

Hurricane Grill & Wings

Shops at Midtown Miami

Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-7133

This Florida fast/casual chain became an instant hit in Midtown Miami owing to a winning concept: more than 35 heat-coded sauces and dry rubs meant for custom-tossing with wings and other things (including white-meat "boneless wings," really wing-shaped chicken breast pieces), accompanied by ranch or classic blue-cheese dip and celery. It would be silly to not pair your main with garlic/herb-butter parmesan fries. There are many other items, too, including salads. But hey, celery is salad, right? \$\$

Jean Paul's House

2426 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-7373

Jean Paul Desmaison, original chef/co-owner of La Cofradia in Coral Gables, has chosen a decidedly less tony, more transitional neighborhood for this venture. But inside his renovated bungalow, ambiance is stylishly cozy, and the creative contemporary North/South American fusion cuisine is as elegant as ever. Best bets are dishes influenced by Desmaison's native Peru, including crispy pork belly braised in pisco with silky sweet potato purée, and a beautifully balanced nikkei (Japanese/Peruvian) salmon sashimi that does the impossible: tame leche de tigre, Peru's infamous "tiger's milk" marinade. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Jimmy's Kitchen

2700 N. Miami Ave. #5, 305-573-1505

No need to trek to South Beach for what many consider Miami's best classic Puerto Rican mofongo (fried green plantains mashed with fresh garlic, olive oil, and pork cracklings, surrounded by chicken or shrimp in zesty criollo sauce). This new location is bigger and better than the original, plus the mofongo is served every day, not just on weekends. But don't ignore the meal-size salads or high-quality sandwiches, including a pressed tripeleta containing roast pork, bacon, Black Forest ham, provolone, and caramelized onions. \$\$

Joey's Italian Café

2506 NW 2nd Ave., 305-438-0488

The first new restaurant in the Wynwood Café District, this stylish indoor/outdoor Italian hangout is as casually cool as one would hope – and as affordable. There's a five-buck half-serving of spaghetti al pomodoro and respectable vino for under \$30. And few can resist delicately thin, crunchy-crust pizzas like the creative Dolce e Piccante or orgasmic Carbonara. Pastas are fresh; produce is largely local; the mosaic-centered décor is minimalist but inviting. And no need to be wary of the warehouse district at night: Valet parking is free. \$-\$\$\$

La Latina

3509 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-9655

At last, an authentic Venezuelan arepera (purveyor of home-made arepas, with a variety of meat, cheese, and veggie fillings) that isn't out in the boonies – and decidedly isn't a dive. With colorful décor concocted from recycled objects, this space, though small, has truly eclectic, Midtown style. The signature corn cakes, crisped outside and fluffy inside, put dozen supermarket specimens to shame. And cachapas (softer, sweeter corn pancakes folded around mozzarella-like fresh cheese) or bollarepitas (cheese-stuffed deep-fried corn cakes, with tangy nata dip) may be even tastier. \$-\$\$

La Provence

2200 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-8002

(See Brickell / Downtown listing.)

Latin Café 2000

2501 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-3838

The menu is similar to that at many of our town's Latin cafés, largely classic Cuban entrées and sandwiches, with a smattering of touches from elsewhere in Latin America, such as a Peruvian jalea mixta (marinated mixed seafood), or paella Valenciana from Spain, which many Miami eateries consider a Latin country. What justifies the new millennium moniker is the more modern, yuppified/yaucified ambiance, encouraged by an expansive, rustic wooden deck. \$\$

Lemoni Café

4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-571-5080

The menu here reads like your standard sandwiches/salads/starters primer. What it doesn't convey is the freshness of the ingredients and the care that goes into their use. Entrée-size

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salads range from an elegant spinach (goat cheese, pears, walnuts, raisins) to chunky homemade chicken salad on a bed of mixed greens. Sandwiches (cold baguette subs, hot pressed paninis, or wraps, all accompanied by side salads) include a respectable Cuban and a veggie wrap with a deceptively rich-tasting light salad cream. \$\$\$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

Shops at Midtown Miami
Buena Vista Avenue, 305-576-5463

Like its South Beach predecessor, this Lime was an instant hit, as much for being a hip new Midtown hangout as for its carefully crafted Tex-Mex food. The concept is "fast casual" rather than fast food – meaning nice enough for a night out. It also means ingredients are always fresh. Seafood tacos are about as exotic as the menu gets, but the mahi mahi for fish tacos comes from a local supplier, and salsas are housemade daily. Niceties include low-carb tortillas and many Mexican beers. \$

Limón y Sabor

3045 Biscayne Blvd., 786-431-5739

In this dramatically renovated space, the room is now light and open, and the food is authentic Peruvian, with seafood a specialty. Portions are huge, prices low, quality high. Especially good are their versions of pescado a lo macho (fish fillet topped with mixed seafood in a creamy, zesty sauce); jalea (breaded and deep-fried fish, mixed seafood, and yuca, topped with onion/pepper/lime salsa), and yuca in hot yet fruity rocoto chili cream sauce. \$\$

Lost & Found Saloon

185 NW 36th St., 305-576-1008

There's an artsy/alternative feel to this casual and friendly Wynwood eatery, which, since opening as a weekday-only breakfast and lunch joint in 2005, has grown with its neighborhood. It's now open for dinner six nights a week, serving Southwestern-style fare at rock-bottom prices. Dishes like piñon and pepita-crusted salmon, chipotle-drizzled endive stuffed with lump crab, or customizable tacos average \$5-\$8. Also available: big breakfasts and salads, hearty soups, housemade pastries like lemon-crusted wild berry pie, and a hip beer and wine list. \$

Mandolin Aegean Bistro

4312 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-6066

Inside this converted 1940s home's blue-and-white dining room – or even more atmospherically, its tree-sheltered garden – diners feast on authentic rustic fare from both Greece and Turkey. Make a meal of multinational mezés: a Greek sampler of creamy tzatziki yogurt dip, smoky eggplant purée, and airy tarama caviar spread; and a Turkish sampler of hummus, fava purée, and rich tomato-walnut dip. The meze of mussels in lemony wine broth is, with Mandolin's fresh-baked flatbread, almost a full meal in itself. \$\$\$

MC Kitchen

4141 NE 2nd Ave., 305-456-9948

Chef/co-owner Denia Marino calls MC's food "modern Italian"

– neither an evocative description nor explanation for why this place is one of our town's hottest tickets. But tasting tells the tale. Marino's food incorporates her entire culinary background, from her Nonna's traditional Italian-American kitchen to a long stint in Michael Chiarello's famed contemporary Californian eatery Tra Vigne, with pronounced personal twists that make eating here uniquely exciting. Particularly definitive: lunchtime's "piadenas," saladlike seasonal/regional ingredient combinations atop heavenly homemade flatbreads. Cocktails feature ingredients from za'atar to salmon roe. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Mercadito Midtown

3252 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0423

Some people frequent this fashionable restolounge, festooned with graffiti-style murals designed to evoke a bustling Mexican street market, just for the dangerously smooth margaritas. But the main must-haves here are tacos, encased in a rarity: genuinely made-from-scratch corn tortillas, small but fatly-stuffed. Of 11 varieties, our favorite is the carnitas (juicy braised pork, spicy chili de arbol slaw, toasted peanuts). A close second: the hongos, intensely flavorful huitlacoche and wild mushrooms, with manchego and salsa verde – a reminder that vegetarian food need not be bland. \$\$\$

Michael's Genuine Food and Drink

130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5550

An instant smash hit, this truly neighborhood-oriented restaurant from chef Michael Schwartz offers down-to-earth fun food in a comfortable, casually stylish indoor/outdoor setting. Fresh, organic ingredients are emphasized, but dishes range from cutting-edge (crispy beef cheeks with whipped celeriac, celery salad, and chocolate reduction) to simple comfort food: deviled eggs, homemade potato chips with pan-fried onion dip, or a whole wood-roasted chicken. There's also a broad range of prices and portion sizes to encourage frequent visits. Michael's Genuine also features an eclectic, affordable wine list and a full bar. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Ming Yuan

3006 NW 2nd Ave.,
305-576-6466

What this tiny (three booths plus counter seats) Wynwood place serves isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. It's Chinese immigrant cooking: America's original Cantonese-based chop sueys and egg foo youngs plus later, spicier but also Americanized Szechuan/Hunan-inspired 1970s inventions like Mongolian beef and General Tso's this-or-that. But all the above (ordered extra-spicy if you like heat), plus crab rangoons and treat-packed special fried rice, are truly tasty. And since almost everything on the menu comes in several sizes, with even "small" being substantial, prices are unbeatable. \$\$\$

Mike's at Venetia

555 NE 15th St., 9th floor, 305-374-5731

This family-owned Irish pub, on the pool deck of the Venetia condo, for more than 15 years has been a popular lunch and dinner hang-out for local journalists and others who appreciate

honest cheap eats and drinks. Regulars know daily specials are the way to go. Depending on the day, fish, churrasco, or roast turkey with all the trimmings are all prepared fresh. Big burgers and steak dinners are always good. A limited late-night menu provides pizza, wings, ribs, and salad till 3:00 a.m. \$\$\$

Morgans Restaurant

28 NE 29th St., 305-573-9678

Housed in a beautifully refurbished 1930s private home, Morgans serves eclectic, sometimes internationally influenced contemporary American cuisine compelling enough to attract hordes. Dishes are basically comfort food, but *ultimate* comfort food: the most custardy, fluffy French toast imaginable; shoe-string frites that rival Belgium's best; mouthwatering maple-basted bacon; miraculously terrific tofu (crispy panko-crusted and apricot/soy-glazed); even a "voluptuous grilled cheese sandwich" – definitely a "don't ask, don't tell your cardiologist" item. \$\$\$

NoVe Kitchen & Bar

1750 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-503-1000

At NoVe, the restolounge at the Opera Tower condo in NoVe (new nickname for the bayfront neighborhood north of the Venetian Causeway), the food is East-West. Meaning you can get burgers, pasta, and so on, or try the inventive Asian small plates and sushi specialties Hiro Terada originated at his past posts, Doraku and Moshi Moshi: the Atlantis roll (tempura conch with asparagus, avocado, scallions, and curry sauce); spicy, crunchy fried tofu atop kimchi salad; much more. Open 6:00 a.m. for breakfast to 3:00 a.m., it is kid-friendly and dog-friendly, too. \$\$\$

Oak Tavern

35 NE 40th St., 786-391-1818

With a festively lantern-lit oak tree on the outdoor dining patio and stylishly playful lamps mimicking oaks inside, chef/restaurateur David Bracha of River Oyster Bar has transformed a previously cold space to warm. Food is equally inviting. The mostly small-plates seasonal menu roams the globe from supreme Vietnamese bahn mi (with pork belly and foie gras) to down-home buttermilk biscuits with bacon butter, and homemade charcuterie. If available, don't miss Hawaiian-inspired steelhead poke; substituting the salmonlike but more delicate trout for the usual tuna transports this crudo to heavenly heights. \$\$\$

Orange Café + Art

2 NE 40th St., 305-571-4070

The paintings hanging in this tiny, glass-enclosed café are for sale. And for those who don't have thousands of dollars to shell out for the local art on the walls, less than ten bucks will get you art on a plate, including a Picasso: chorizo, prosciutto, manchego cheese, baby spinach, and basil on a crusty baguette. Other artfully named and crafted edibles include salads, daily soups, several pastas (like the Matisse, flocchi pouches filled with pears and cheese), and house-baked pastries. \$

Pasha's

3801 N. Miami Ave., 305-573-0201
(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

Pasta Folie's

Shops at Midtown Miami
3252 NE 1st Ave. #118, 786-382-0205

In France the word "folie" can mean "extravagant." More often it means "madness." It's the latter translation that first comes to mind when perusing the menu of this French Rivera pasta/pizza fast-casual chain, whose concept is pastas, plus pizzas, from around the world – even Italy. Don't expect authenticity from the more exotic toppings; they basically contain one typical ingredient (along with a generic onions/peppers/veg assortment): bean sprouts in Thailand's spaghetti, pineapple in Bali's, curry sauce on India's. Do expect super-fresh sauces, made daily. Friendly staffers and fun. \$\$

Pieducks

3500 N. Miami Ave., 305-576-5550

(See Brickell/Downtown listing)

Pride & Joy

2800 N. Miami Ave., 305-456-9548

Behind this Wynwood warehouse façade you'll find pure Southern roadhouse, and the backyard patio is an even more relaxing place to kick back with beer, blues music, and barbecue from pit master Myron Mixon. Oddly, considering Mixon's many BBQ championships, the 'cue can be inconsistent. Our favorite choices: St. Louis ribs, tender without being falling-off-the-bone overcooked, and enjoyably fattier than baby backs; vinegar-doused pulled pork sandwiches, which, unlike meat plates, come with sides – fries, plus slaw to pile on for added juice and crunch. \$\$\$

Primo's

1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-371-9055

The imposing, cavernous lobby of the Grand doesn't have that "do drop in" locals' hangout vibe. But this lively Italian spot is actually a great addition to the neighborhood. The pizzas alone – brick-oven specimens with toppings ranging from classic pepperoni to prosciutto/arugula – would be draw enough. But pastas also please: diners' choice of starch, with mix-and-match sauces and extras. And the price is right, with few entrées topping \$20. The capper: It's open past midnight every day but Sunday. \$\$

Primo Pizza Miami

3451 NE 1st Ave., 305-535-2555

Just a few years ago, chain pizza joints were dominant most everywhere. Today many places now offer authentic Italian or delicate designer pizzas. But a satisfying Brooklyn-style street slice? Fuhgedd. Thankfully that's the specialty of this indoor/outdoor pizzeria: big slices with chewy crusts (made from imported NY tap water) that aren't ultra-thin and crisp, but flexible enough to fold lengthwise, and medium-thick – sturdy enough to support toppings applied with generous all-American abandon. Take-out warning: Picking up a whole pie? Better bring the SUV, not the Morris Mini.

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Sakaya Kitchen

Shops at Midtown Miami, Buena Vista Avenue
305-576-8096

This chef-driven, fast-casual Asian eatery is more an izakaya (in Japan, a pub with food) than a sakaya (sake shop). But why quibble about words with so many more intriguing things to wrap your mouth around? The concept takes on street-food favorites from all over Asia, housemade daily from quality fresh ingredients. French Culinary Institute-trained Richard Hales does change his menu, so we'd advise immediately grabbing some crispy Korean chicken wings and Chinese-inspired, open-faced roast pork buns with sweet chili sauce and homemade pickles. \$\$\$

Sake Room

275 NE 18th St., 305-755-0122

Sake takes a back seat to sushi – and sophisticated décor – at this small but sleek restorlounge. Among the seafood offerings, you won't find exotica or local catches, but all the usual sushi/sashimi favorites, though in more interesting form, thanks to sauces that go beyond standard soy – spicy sriracha, garlic/ponzu oil, and many more. Especially recommended: the yuzu hamachi roll, the lobster tempura maki, and panko-coated spicy shrimp with hot-and-sour Mayo and a salad. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salad Creations

2001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-576-5333

At this fast-casual restaurant, diners can enjoy a wide variety of chef-created salads and wraps, or go the DIY route, choosing from one of four greens options; four dozen add-ons (fresh, dried, or pickled veggies and fruits, plus cheeses and slightly sinful pleasures like candied pecans or wonton strips); a protein (seafood or poultry); and two dozen dressings, ranging from classic (Thousand Island, bleu cheese) to creative contemporary (spicy Asian peanut, cucumber wasabi, blueberry pomegranate). Additionally, the place creates lovely catering platters, plus individual lunchboxes – perfect picnic or plane food. \$\$\$

Salumeria 104

3451 NE 1st Ave. #104, 305-424-9588

In Italy, salumerias started, like American delicatessens, as shops selling salumi (cured meats), but evolved into the equivalent of eat-in deli/restaurants that also serve cold and hot prepared foods. At this modern Midtown salumeria, the soups-to-salads-to-sweets range of fare is the same. Custom-sliced imported cold cuts are a main focus, especially for those who enjoy taste-testing a plate pairing Italy's two most famous prosciuttos: Parma and San Daniele. But homemade pastas are also impressive, as are hard-to-find regional entrées like fegato alla Veneziana, which will turn liver-haters into lovers. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Salsa Fiesta

2929 Biscayne Blvd., 305-400-8245

The first stateside offshoot of a popular Venezuelan mini chain, this "urban Mexican grill" serves health-conscious, made-fresh-daily fare similar in concept to some fast-casual competitors. But there are indeed differences here, notably pan-Latin options: black beans as well as red; thin, delightfully crunchy tostones (available as a side or as the base for a uniquely tasty take on normal nachos). Other pluses include weekday happy hours with two-for-one beers – and free parking. \$\$\$

S & S Diner

1757 NE 2nd Ave., 305-373-4291

Some things never change, or so it seems at this classic diner. Open since 1938, people still line up on Saturday mornings, waiting for a seat at the counter and enormous breakfasts: corned beef hash or crab cakes and eggs with grits; fluffy pancakes; homemade biscuits with gravy and Georgia sausage – everything from oatmeal to eggs Benedict. The lunch menu is a roll call of the usual suspects, but most regulars ignore the menu and go for the daily blackboard specials. \$\$\$

Shokudo World Resource Café

4740 NE 2nd Ave., 305-758-7782

At its former Lincoln Road location, World Resource's café was better known for people-watching than for its standard sushi/Thai menu. But as the new name signals, this relocation is a reinvention. The indoor/outdoor space is charming, but creative takes on popular pan-Asian street foods are the real draw. Travel from Japan and Thailand through Korea, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and beyond via light housemade momo, curried potato-stuffed Tibetan/Nepalese steamed dumplings; savory pulled pork buns with kimchi and crisped onions. Noodle dishes, hot or chilled, are especially appealing. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

South Street Restaurant & Bar

4000 NE 2nd Ave., 305-573-5474

In the historic Buena Vista post office building, this "neo-soul food" restaurant features family recipes from chef Amaris

Jones, a Philly native. Along with tasty traditional favorites like fried chicken or shrimp and cheese grits with low-country gravy, there are lightened classics (green tomatoes that are grilled, not fried, with basil cream aioli), plus a few items whose street cred seems to come from a Soul Train stop at the Bryn Mawr Country Club (surf and turf). Food comes with a soul soundtrack befitting the lounge vibe. \$\$\$

Sugarcane Raw Bar Grill

3250 NE 1st Ave., 786-369-0353

This chic indoor/outdoor space is an offspring of Lincoln Road's SushiSamba Dromo and a sibling of Sugarcane lounges in NYC and Las Vegas, but more informal than the former and more food-oriented than the latter, as three kitchens – normal, raw bar, and robata charcoal grill – make clear. Chef Timon Balloo's LatAsian small plates range from subtle orange/fennel-marinated salmon crudo to intensely smoky-rich short ribs. At the daily happy hour, select dishes (like steamed pork buns with apple kimchi) are discounted. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tony Chan's Water Club

1717 N. Bayshore Dr., 305-374-8888

The décor at this upscale place, located in the Grand, looks too glitzy to serve anything but politely Americanized Chinese food. But the American dumbing-down is minimal. Many dishes are far more authentic and skillfully prepared than those found elsewhere in Miami, like delicate but flavorful yu pan quail. Moist sea bass fillet has a beautifully balanced topping of scalion, 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. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Vintage Liquor & Wine Bar

3301 NE 1st Ave. #105, 305-514-0307

Gentrified ambiance, a remarkably knowledgeable staff, and a hip stock (including global beers as well as liquor and wine, plus gourmet packaged foods to accompany), and self-service wine dispensers for sampling make this an enjoyable retail shop. A wine/cocktail/tapas bar, open from 4:00 p.m. daily, makes it an enjoyable neighborhood hangout, too. Tapas include beef carpaccio, bruschetta cones, varied salads and empanadas, a daily ceviche, and fresh-made sandwiches. And remember to ask about special events: karaoke Thursdays, monthly wine dinners, tastings, more. \$\$\$

Wine Vault Miami

Shops at Midtown Miami

Fountain Circle #105, 786-691-2000

From a Wine Vault press release: "Over 1300 square feet of pure decadence." In fact, the soaring, two-story space, complete with glass elevator, has a look that lives up to the hype. But the most decadent thing inside is a nibble from its tapas list: chocolate-covered bacon. Go ahead and make a meal of it. We grow-up can eat what we want. More substantial plates to accompany the roughly four dozen wines, artisan beers, or cocktails include chorizo with new potatoes, and sweetly piquant piquillo peppers stuffed with shredded tuna. Happy-hour wine prices are so low we'd better not mention them. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Wynwood Kitchen & Bar

2550 NW 2nd Ave., 305-722-8959

The exterior is eye-popping enough, with murals from world-famous outdoor artists, but it's the interior that grabs you. Colorful and exotic work by Shepard Fairey, Christian Awe, and other acclaimed artists makes it one of the most striking restaurant spaces anywhere. As for food, the original menu has been replaced with Spanish/Latin/Mediterranean-inspired favorites from chef Miguel Aguilar (formerly of Alma de Cuba): gazpacho or black bean soups; shredded chicken ropa vieja empanadas with cilantro crema; grilled octopus skewers with tapenade; plus fingerling potato-chorizo hash and other seasonal farm-to-table veg dishes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Upper Eastside

Andiamo

5600 Biscayne Blvd. 305-762-5751

With brick-oven pizzerias popping up all over town the past few years, it's difficult to remember the dark days when this part of Mark Soyka's 55th Street Station complex was mainland Miami's sole source of open-flame-cooked pies. But the pizzas still hold up against the newbie pack, especially since exec chef Frank Crupi has upped the ante with unique-to-Miami offerings like a white (tomato-free) New Haven clam pie. Also available: salads, panini, and a tasty meatball appetizer with ricotta. There's a respectable wine and beer list, too. \$\$

Balans Biscayne

6789 Biscayne Blvd., 305-534-9191

It took longer than expected, but this Brit import's third Miami venue finally opened, and rather quietly – which has an upside. It's easier to get a table here (and to park, thanks to the free lot on 68th Street) than at Lincoln Road or Brickell. This, along with the venue's relatively large, open-to-the-street outdoor area, contributes to a more relaxed, neighborhood-focused vibe. The fun menu of global comfort food is the same (ranging from a creamy-centered cheese soufflé through savory Asian potstickers and, at breakfast, fluffy pecan/maple-garnished pancakes) and prepared as reliably well. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Blue Collar

6730 Biscayne Blvd., 305-756-0366

Like its predecessor in this space (Michael Bloise's American Noodle Bar), this working-class-themed eatery is helmed by a former fine-dining chef, Daniel Serfer, a Chef Allen's vet who now crafts casual, creative fare at prices all can afford. Dishes are eclectic. The roughly dozen veggie dishes alone range from curried cauliflower purée to maduros to bleu cheese roasted asparagus. Shrimp and grits compete with any in Charleston; pork and beans, topped with a perfectly runny fried egg, beats Boston's best. \$\$\$

Boteco

916 NE 79th St., 305-757-7735

This strip of 79th Street is rapidly becoming a cool alt-culture enclave thanks to inviting hangouts like this rustic indoor/outdoor Brazilian restaurant and bar. Especially bustling on nights featuring live music, it's even more fun on Sundays, when the fenced backyard hosts an informal fair and the menu includes Brazil's national dish, feijoada, a savory stew of beans plus fresh and cured meats. But the everyday menu, ranging from unique, tapas-like pastéis to hefty Brazilian entrées, is also appealing – and budget-priced. \$\$

Buddha Sushi Bar

1071 NE 79th St., 305-677-3633

While the setting is still more low-rent/high-speed causeway than restaurant row, this stylish, much-more-than-sushi spot definitely brings the street giant steps toward destination-dining status. The invention and skill shown in makis like the Fruity (shrimp, salmon, tuna, whitefish, roe, asparagus, and peaches, dressed with creamy mustard sauce), or small plates like shrimp crullers with a red wine reduction, isn't surprising considering the crafter is Michael Asalie, original chef at downtown's Little Lotus. Order from the menu or grab something from the circulating "sushi river," whatever floats your boat. \$\$\$

Chef Creole

200 NW 54th St., 305-754-2223

Sparkling fresh Creole-style food is the star at chef/owner Wilkinson Sejour's two tiny but popular establishments. While some meatier Haitian classics like griot (fried pork chunks) and oxtail stew are also available – and a \$3.99 roast chicken special – seafood is the specialty here: crevette en sauce (steamed shrimp with Creole butter sauce), lambi fri (perfectly tenderized fried conch), poisson gros sel (local snapper in a spicy butter sauce), garlic or Creole crabs. The Miami branch has outdoor tiki-hut dining. \$\$\$

DeVita's

7251 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-8282

This Italian/Argentinean pizzeria, housed in a charming bungalow and featuring a breezy patio, covers multicultural bases. If the Old World Rucola pizza (a classic Margherita topped with arugula, prosciutto, and shredded parmesan) doesn't do the trick, the New World Especial (a Latin pie with hearts of palm and boiled eggs) just might. Also available are pastas, salads, sandwiches, dinner entrées (eggplant parmigiana with spaghetti, lomito steak with Argentinean potato salad), and desserts (tiramisu or flan). \$

Dogma Grill

7030 Biscayne Blvd. 305-759-3433

Since Frankie and Priscilla Crupi took over this hot dog stand, the menu has changed significantly, with some items eliminated (any vegetarian hot dogs, salads, chichi toppings like avocado). But choices have expanded to include new dog choices (brats, Italian sausage, more) plus burgers and other classic eastern U.S. regional urban street foods: New England lobster rolls, New Orleans po'boys, Jersey shore cheese Tylors (pork roll), Baltimore crab cake sandwiches, and naturally, Philly's of all sorts – cheese steak and beyond. \$\$\$

East Side Pizza

731 NE 79th St., 305-758-5351

Minestrone, sure. But a pizzeria menu with carrot ginger soup? Similarly many Italian-American pizzerias offer entrées like spaghetti and meatballs, but East Side also has pumpkin ravioli in brown butter/sage sauce, wild mushroom ravioli, and other surprisingly upscale choices, including imported Peroni beer. As for the pizza, they are classic pies, available whole or by the slice, made with fresh plum tomato sauce and Grande mozzarella (considered the top American pizza cheese). Best seating for eating is at the sheltered outdoor picnic tables. \$

The Federal Food, Drink & Provisions

5132 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-9559

At the Fed, expect what locals know to expect from sommelier/chef team Aniece Meinhold and Cesar Zapata, whose previous restaurant concepts have included Blue Piano (gourmet stoner snacks) and Vietnamese pop-up Phuc Yea. That is, expect the unexpected. The Fed is an updated tavern featuring creative, from-scratch takes on traditional American regional dishes: flaky Southern biscuits with sausage gravy (and crisp-coated sweetbreads, if desired); Northeastern-inspired "pig wings" (pork drumettes with homemade Buffalo sauce, blue cheese mousse, and pickled veggies). Desserts, from third partner Alejandro Ortiz, include sinful sticky buns. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Garden of Eatin'

136 NW 62nd St., 305-754-8050

Housed in a yellow building that's nearly invisible from the street, the Garden has the comfortable feel of a beach bar, and generous servings of inexpensive Afro-Caribbean vegan food. Large or small plates, with salad and fried sweet plantains (plus free soup for eat-in lunchers), are served for five or seven bucks. Also available are snacks like vegetarian blue corn tacos, desserts like sweet potato pie, and a breakfast menu featuring organic blueberry waffles with soy sausage patties. \$

Go To Sushi

5140 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-0914

This friendly, family-run Japanese fast-food eatery offers original surprises like the Caribbean roll (a festively green parsley-coated maki stuffed with crispy fried shrimp, avocado, sweet plantain, and spicy Mayo), or a wonderfully healthful sesame-seasoned chicken soup with spinach, rice noodles, and sizable slices of poultry. Health ensured, you can enjoy a guiltless pig-out on Fireballs: fried dumplings of chicken, cabbage, and egg, crusted with quills – really a delectable crunchy noodle mix. \$

Gourmet Station

7601 Biscayne Blvd., 305-762-7229

Home-meal replacement, geared to workaholics with no time to cook, has been popular for years. But the Gourmet Station has outlasted most of the competition. Main reason: deceptive healthiness. These are meals that are good for you, yet taste good enough to be bad for you. Favorite items include precision-grilled salmon with lemon-dill yogurt sauce, and lean turkey meatloaf with homemade BBQ sauce – sin-free comfort food. Food is available à la carte or grouped in multimeal plans customized for individual diner's nutritional needs. \$\$

Iron Side Café

7600 NE 4th Ct., 305-759-0551

Located in the Little River "business" (meaning warehouse) district, inside an art complex that looks like just another factory, this eatery is easy to miss. But it shouldn't be missed. Both the cozy interior and more expansive terrace provide picturesque settings for artfully plated, seriously organic and locally sourced fare from Nuno Grullon, original exec chef at Metro Organic Bistro. Particularly recommended: tuna tartare with a unique spicy lemon dressing; ossa buco featuring flavorful grass-fed beef from Gaucho Ranch right down the road. Saturday BBQ/gallery nights are especially hip. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Jimmy's East Side Diner

7201 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-3692

Open for more than 30 years, Jimmy's respects the most important American diner tradition: breakfast at any hour. And now that the place is open for dinner, you can indulge your breakfast cravings for several more hours. There are blueberry hot cakes and pecan waffles; eggs any style, including omelets and open-face fritattas; and a full range of sides: biscuits and sausage gravy, grits, hash, hash browns, even hot oatmeal. And don't forget traditional diner entrées like meat loaf, roast turkey, liver and onions, plus burgers, salad platters, and homemade chicken soup. \$\$\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

La Cigale

7281 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-0014

"Bistro" can mean almost anything these days, but with owners who are a husband/wife team recently arrived from Marseille, it's not surprising that this neighborhood wine bistro is the classic kind found in France – a home away from home where the contemporary but cozy space is matched by the southern French comfort food coming from the open kitchen. Drop in for drinks and snacks such as artisan cheeses and charcuterie, or enjoy full meals ranging from classic (wine-poached mussels; a boldly sauced steak/frites) to creative (Parma ham-wrapped tuna loin). \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Lo De Lea

7001 Biscayne Blvd., 305-456-3218

In Casa Toscana's former space, this cute, contemporary parillada is proof that you can have an Argentinean meal and a cholesterol test in the same month. While traditional parillada dishes are tasty, they're meat/fat-heavy, basically heaps of grilled beef. Here the grill is also used for vegetables (an unusually imaginative assortment, including bok choy, endive, and fennel), two of which are paired with your protein of choice. You can indulge in a mouthwateringly succulent vacio (flank steak), and walk out without feeling like you're the cow. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Magnum Lounge

709 NE 79th St., 305-757-3368

It's a restaurant. It's a lounge. But it's decidedly not a typical Miami restorlounge, or like anything else in Miami. Forbidding from the outside, on the inside it's like a time-trip to a cabaret in pre-WWII Berlin: bordello-red décor, romantically dim lighting, show-tune live piano bar entertainment, and to match the ambiance, elegantly updated retro food served with style and a smile. For those feeling flush, home-style fried chicken is just like mom used to make – in her wildest dreams. \$\$\$

Metro Organic Bistro

7010 Biscayne Blvd., 305-751-8756

Big changes have come to Karma the car wash, the first being a separate new name for the revamped restaurant: Metro Organic Bistro, an all-organic fine-dining restaurant where simple preparations reveal and enhance natural flavors. An entirely new menu places emphasis on grilled organic meat and fish dishes. Try the steak frites – organic, grass-fed skirt steak with organic chimichurri and fresh-cut fries. Vegetarians will love the organic portabella focaccia. Dine either inside the architect-designed restaurant or outdoors on the patio. Beer and wine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Michy's

6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001

Don't even ask why Michele Bernstein, with a top-chef résumé, don't mention regular Food Network appearances, opened a homey restaurant in an emerging but far from fully gentrified neighborhood. Just be glad she did, as you dine on white almond gazpacho or impossibly creamy ham and blue cheese croquetas. Though most full entrées also come in half-size portions (at almost halved prices), the tab can add up fast. The star herself is usually in the kitchen. Parking in the rear off 69th Street. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Mi Vida Café

7244 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-6020

At this indoor/outdoor vegetarian and raw-food vegan café, culinary-school-trained chef/owner Daniela Lagamma produces purist produce-oriented dishes that are easy to understand, like sparkling-fresh salads and smoothies, plus more technique-intensive mock meat or cheese items, based on soy proteins, that satisfy even confirmed carnivores. Particularly impressive on the regular menu: a superior Sloppy Joe made with mushroom confit, braised homemade seitan, spinach, and rich almond romesco sauce; and cannelloni de verdura, homemade crepes stuffed with spinach and cashew "ricotta." Do check the daily specials, too. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moonchine

7100 Biscayne Blvd.,

305-759-3999

Like its Brickell-area sibling Indochine, this friendly Asian bistro serves fare from three nations: Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Menus are also similar, split between traditional dishes like pad Thai and East/West fusion creations like the Vampire sushi roll (shrimp tempura, tomato, cilantro, roasted garlic). But it also carves out its own identity with original creations, including yellow curry-spiced fried rice. Nearly everything is low in sodium, fat, and calories. A large rear patio is inviting for dining and entertainment. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Moshi Moshi

7232 Biscayne Blvd., 786-220-9404

This offspring of South Beach old-timer Moshi Moshi is a cross between a sushi bar and an izakaya (Japanese tapas bar). Even more striking than the hip décor is the food's unusually upscale quality. Sushi ranges from pristine individual nigiri to over-the-top maki rolls. Tapas are intriguing, like arabiki sausage, a sweet-savory pork fingerling frank; rarely found in restaurants even in Japan, they're popular Japanese home-cooking items. And rice-based plates like Japanese curry (richer/sweeter than Indian types) satisfy even the biggest appetites. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Namaste

7420 Biscayne Blvd.,

786-536-9050

With food served from steam-table-type stations, plus plastic utensils and plates, this neighborhood Indian place is definitely no frills. But it's also excellent value for the money, especially if you go for the all-day \$8.99 special, which includes two entrée items plus sides for which most Indian restaurants charge extra: rice, choice of bread (garlic naan recommended), and refreshing raita. Invest some of your savings in BhelPapri chat, a savory snack featuring crisp chips topped with cilantro-spiked chickpeas, onions, potatoes, yogurt, and piquant tamarind sauce. \$\$\$

News Lounge

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-758-9932

Mark Soyka's new News is, as its name suggests, more a friendly neighborhood hangout and watering hole than a full-fledged eatery. Nevertheless the menu of light bites is – along with other lures like an inviting outdoor patio and rest rooms that resemble eclectic art galleries – part of the reason visitors stay for hours. Especially recommended are fat mini-burgers with chipotle ketchup; a brie, turkey, and mango chutney sandwich on crusty baguette; and what many feel is the original café's Greatest Hit: creamy hummus with warm pita. \$

Ni.Do. Caffe & Mozzarella Bar

7295 Biscayne Blvd., 305-960-7022

Don't let this little café's easily overlooked strip-mall location, or its informal interior, fool you. The warm welcome is authentically Italian, as are cleverly crafted antipasti, simple but full-flavored pastas, and homemade pastries (from rosemary breadsticks to fruit-topped dessert tortas) that will transport your taste buds to Tuscany. And the housemade mozzarella oil burrata cheeses – truly milk elevated to royalty – will transport you to heaven. A small market area provides Italian staples, plus superb salumi and the magnificent mozz, to go. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Royal Bavarian Schnitzel Haus

1085 NE 79th St., 305-754-8002

With Christmas lights perpetually twinkling and party noises emanating from a new outdoor biergarten, this German restaurant is owner Alex Richter's one-man gentrification project, transforming a formerly uninviting stretch of 79th Street one pils at a time. The fare includes housemade sausages (mild veal bratwurst, hearty mixed beef/pork bauernwurst, spicy garlicwurst) with homemade mustard and catsup; savory yet near-greaseless potato pancakes; and, naturally, schnitzels, a choice of delicate pounded pork, chicken, or veal patties served with a half-dozen different sauces. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Siam Rice

7941 Biscayne Blvd., 305-758-0516

You'll find all the familiar favorite Thai and Japanese items here, and prices for curries and noodle dishes (all customizable regarding choice of protein, preparation, and heat level) are especially good at lunch. But don't overlook somewhat pricier specialties like a deep-fried yet near-greaseless boneless half duck with veggies in red curry sauce. There's also an unusually extensive list of salads, some with inventive fusion touches, like a grilled shrimp/soba salad featuring traditional Thai flavors (sriracha chiles, fish sauce, lime) and Japanese green tea noodles. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Soyka

5556 NE 4th Court, 305-759-3117

Since opening in 1999, Soyka has often been credited with sparking the Upper Eastside's revival. But the 2010 arrival of three Joe Allen veterans as executive chef, pastry chef, and sommelier signaled a culinary revival for the restorlounge, always a neighborhood focal point, now more food-focused. The contemporary comfort food menu ranges from fun small plates (deviled eggs with smoked salmon and dill, crisp-fried flocchi pockets with gorgonzola sauce, oysters Rockefeller) to heftier items like burgers and steak au poivre. And don't miss the sticky date/toffee pudding. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sushi Siam

5582 NE 4th Ct., 305-751-7818

On the menu of sushi-bar specialties plus a small selection of Thai and Japanese cooked dishes, there are a few surprises, such as a unique lobster maki that's admittedly huge in price (\$25.95), but also in size: six ounces of crisp-fried lobster chunks, plus asparagus, avocado, lettuce, tobiko (flying fish), masago (smelt) roes, and special sauces. Thai dishes come with a choice of more than a dozen sauces, ranging from traditional red or green curries to the inventive, such as an unconventional honey sauce. \$\$\$

Uva's

6900 Biscayne Blvd., 305-754-9022

Formerly UVA 69, this casual-chic café/lounge, a MiMo neighborhood pioneer, has changed its name and original owners, but remains an all-day-to-late-night hangout. And menu strong points also remain, from fresh-baked pastries and breads to elegant cross-cultural sandwiches (particularly two Latin-inspired upgrades: a classic Cuban with French ham, cornichons, and a baguette; and la minuta, a beer-battered fish fillet on focaccia with cilantro aioli). Whether diners opt for full entrées or make a meal of small plates, the subtle global blending makes fusion make sense. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Yiya's Gourmet Cuban Bakery

646 NE 79th St., 305-754-3337

A true community jewel, this bakery is also a most welcoming café, serving lunch specials from chef Delsa Bernardo (who co-owns the place with attorney Abbie Cuellar) that are home-made right down to the herbs grown on the bakery's window sills. Bernardo's pan con lechon sandwiches and flaky-crust Cuban pastries are legend. But she also crafts treats not found at average Cuban bakeries, like pizzas using housemade Indian naan bread. Additionally Bernardo carries unique treats produced by a few friends: candies, cupcakes, and exotically flavored flans. \$

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

The Crab House

1551 79th St. Causeway, 305-868-7085

Established in 1975, this Miami fish house was acquired by Landry's in 1996 and is now part of a chain. But the classic décor (knotty pine walls, tile floors, booths, outdoor waterfront deck) still evokes the good old days. Though the all-you-can-eat seafood/salad buffet (\$20 lunch, \$30 dinner) is a signature, freshness fanatics will be happiest sticking to à la carte favorites like the All-American fisherman's platters, or global specials like Szechuan shrimp, that change seasonally. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Japanese Market and Sushi Deli

1412 79th St. Causeway, 305-861-0143

Inside a small market that is widely considered Miami's premier source of Japanese foodstuffs, the "Sushi Deli" restaurant component is nothing more than a lunch counter. But chef Michio Kushi serves up some sushi found nowhere else in town. Example: traditional Osaka-style sushi – layers of rice, seasoned seaweed, and marinated fresh mackerel, pressed into a square box, then cut into lovely one-bite sandwich squares. While raw fish is always impeccable here, some unusual vegetarian sushi creations also tempt, as do daily entrées. \$

Oggi Caffe

1666 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1238

This cozy, romantic spot started back in 1989 as a pasta factory (supplying numerous high-profile restaurants) as well as a neighborhood eatery. And the wide range of budget-friendly, homemade pastas, made daily, remains the main draw for its large and loyal clientele. Choices range from homey, meaty lasagna to luxuriant crab ravioli with creamy lobster sauce, with occasional forays into creative exotica such as seaweed spaghetti, with sea scallops, shitakes, and fresh tomatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Sabor Latin Restaurant & Cafe

1880 79th St. Cswy., 305-741-2020

This family-run restaurant serves big portions of homey traditional food from several Latin American countries, including Cuba (pan con bistec, ropa vieja), Mexico (nachos, tacos, quesadillas), and Peru (lomo saltado). But the specialty is Colombian classics, from snacks like empanadas to a bandeja paisa combo (grilled steak, chorizo, a gargantuan crispy chicharron strip, fried egg, arepa, plantains, beans, rice). Particularly recommended: daily specials including two meal-in-a-bowl chicken soups, ajiao, and sancocho. If you've wondered about the much-debated difference, here's where to test the taste. \$\$\$

Shuckers Bar & Grill

1819 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1570

"Cheap eats and a million-dollar view" is the sound bite manager Philip Conklin uses to describe this outdoor beach bar, hidden in back of a bayfront motel. The joint dates from South Beach's late 1980s revival, but the kick-off-your-shoes vibe couldn't be farther from SoBe glitz. The food ranges from classic bar favorites (chall-drilled wings, conch fritters, raw or steamed shellfish) to full-grillers featuring steak, homemade pasta, or fresh, not frozen, fish. \$\$\$

Sushi Siam

1524 NE 79th St. Causeway, 305-864-7638

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

Trio on the Bay

1601 79th St. Causeway, 305-866-1234

Several ventures have failed in this expansive indoor/outdoor waterfront space, but that's hard to imagine once you've experienced this stunning incarnation as an exciting yet affordable restaurant/nightclub where food definitely doesn't play second fiddle to entertainment. Former Crystal Café chef Klime Kovaceski created the original menu, and among his dishes still available is the filet mignon atop surprisingly pistachio-studded béarnaise sauce. Now there is a range of Mediterranean offerings as well, from grilled calamari steaks to mahi picatta. \$\$\$

NORTH BEACH

Café Prima Pasta

414 71st St., 305-867-0106

Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? Opened in 1993 (with 28 seats), the Cea family's now-sprawling trattoria has added inventive chef Carlos Belon and modern menu items, including flocchi rapera (pear/cheese-filled pasta purses with truffled prosciutto cream sauce), an unlikely (soy sauce and parmesan cheese?) but luscious Italian/Japanese fusion tuna carpaccio, and fresh-fruit sorbets. But traditionalists needn't worry. All the old favorites, from the café's famed beef carpaccio to eggplant parm and pastas sauced with Argentine-Italian indulgence, are still here and still satisfying. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

K'Chapas

1130 Normandy Dr., 305-864-8872

Formerly the Peruvian restaurant Pachamama, this space is now both Peruvian and Venezuelan – but not fusion. The Venezuelan sisters who run the place keep dishes true to country. Most Big Food comes from Peru: fresh ceviches, classic cooked entrées. But it's the Venezuelan breakfast/snack items that keep us coming, especially signature cachapas, somewhat similar to arepas but harder to find in restaurants. These moist pancakes, made from ground corn kernels instead of just corn meal, are folded over salty white cheese for a uniquely bold balance of sweetness and savor. \$\$\$

Lou's Beer Garden

7337 Harding Ave., 305-704-7879

"Beer garden" conjures up an image of Bavarian bratwurst, lederhosen, and oompah bands – none of which you'll find here. It's actually a hip hideaway in the New Hotel's pool-patio area, a locals' hangout with interesting eclectic fare and a perennial party atmosphere. Especially recommended: delicately pan-fried mini-crab cakes served with several house-made sauces; hefty bleu cheese burgers with Belgian-style double-cooked fries; blackened "angry shrimp" with sweet/sour sauce; fried fresh sardines. And of course much beer, a changing list of craft brews. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Rouge CineCafe

908 71st St., 305-865-5955

This friendly café's décor is indeed playfully red, and the "cine" refers to vintage films projected unobtrusively on a wall. But the main attraction is the French and Moroccan food, both genres as authentically homey as you'll find in the homes of those cuisines. For hearty eaters, exotically spiced tagine stews, like lamb with prunes, are the way to go. Grazers will find Rouge's bocaditos (evocatively French saucisson sec, or Moroccan merguez sausage with grilled onions and hot harissa sauce, both on crusty Boulart bread) irresistible – as are housemade desserts. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Tamarind Thai

946 Normandy Dr., 305-861-6222

When an eatery's executive chef is best-selling Thai cookbook author Vatcharin Bhumichitr, you'd expect major media hype, fancy South Beach prices, and a fancy SoBe address. Instead Bhumichitr joined forces with Day Longsomboon (an old Thai school pal who'd moved to Miami) at this unpretentious,



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

authentic (no sushi) neighborhood place. Some standout dishes here are featured in the chef's latest tome, but with Tamarind's very affordable prices, you might as well let the man's impeccably trained kitchen staff do the work for you. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

The Wine Market

908 71st St., 305-865-6465

This rustic-chic wine shop, tapas bar, and restaurant is the sort of place that every emerging neighborhood needs. The wine stock isn't huge but the selection is thoughtful, with many bottles priced from \$10 to \$20. Take it home or pay a small corkage fee and drink on-premises over a meal centered on typical Parisian bistro entrées like steak or moules frites (the latter regularly available all-you-can-eat). If you'd prefer going the tapas bar route, highlights include a silky cognac/truffle chicken liver mousse and battered shrimp with remoulade sauce to make your own po'boy crostinis. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

MIAMI SHORES

Côte Gourmet

9999 NE 2nd Ave., #112, 305-754-9012

If only every Miami neighborhood could have a neighborhood restaurant like this low-priced little French jewel. The menu is mostly simple stuff: breakfast croissants, crêpe, soups, sandwiches, salads, sweets, and a few more substantial specials like a Tunisian-style brik (buttery phyllo pastry stuffed with tuna, onions, potatoes, and tomatoes) with a mesclun side salad. But everything is homemade, including all breads, and prepared with impeccable ingredients, classic French technique, and meticulous attention to detail, down to the stylish plaid ribbons that hold together the café's baguette sandwiches. \$\$-\$\$

Iron Sushi

9432 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-0311

With three Biscayne Corridor outlets (plus several branches elsewhere in town), this mostly take-out mini chain is fast becoming the Sushi Joint That Ate Miami. And why do Miamians eat here? Not ambiance. There isn't any. But when friends from the Pacific Northwest, where foodies know their fish, tout the seafood's freshness, we listen. There are some surprisingly imaginative makis, like the Maharaja, featuring fried shrimp and drizzles of curry Mayo. And where else will you find a stacked sushi (five assorted makis) birthday cake? \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Miami Shores Country Club

10000 Biscayne Blvd., 305-795-2363

Formerly members-only, the restaurant/lounge facilities of this classy 1939 club are now open to the public – always, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, ambiance is retro and relaxed, with golf course views from both bar and indoor/outdoor dining room. The surprise is the food – some classic (steaks, club sandwiches) but other dishes quite contemporary: an Asian ahi tuna tower; a lavish candied-walnut, poached-pear, grilled chicken salad; and fresh pasta specials. Prices are phenomenal, with dinner entrées \$9 to \$17; drinks average \$3 to \$4. \$\$\$

PizzaFiore

9540 NE 2nd Ave., 305-754-1924

Owned by Arcoub Abderrahim, who opened South Beach's original PizzaFiore way back in 1996, this café serves the kind of nostalgic, medium-thin crusted, oozing-with-goopy-cheese pizzas reminiscent of our childhood pies in northern NJ Sopranos' territory, except now there are options for today's toppings – sundried tomatoes, buffalo mozzarella, etc. But there's also a full menu of Italian-American classics, including antipasto salads, subs, and particularly popular, pastas. Garlic rolls are a must, but we didn't have to tell you that. \$\$\$

NORTH MIAMI

Alaska Coffee Roasting Co.

13130 Biscayne Blvd., 786-332-4254

When people speak of the West Coast as the USA's quality coffeehouse pioneer territory, they're thinking Seattle – and then south through coastal California. North to Alaska? Not so much. But owner Michael Gesser did indeed open this hip place's parent in Fairbanks back in 1993, after years of traveling through every coffee-growing country in the world. Brews like signature smooth yet exotic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe don't even need cream or sugar, much less frappe frou-frou. All beans are house-roasted. There's solid food, too: brick-oven pizzas, salads, sandwiches, and pastries. \$\$\$

Bagel Bar East

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 sliced – nova or lox. Super size sandwiches easily serve two, and they'll even improvise a real NJ Sloppy Joe (two meats, Swiss, coleslaw, and Russian dressing on rye) if you ask nice. \$\$\$

Bagels & Co.

11064 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-2435

While this place is often referred to as Guns & Bagels, one can't actually buy a gun here. The nickname refers to its location next to a firearms shop. But there's a lot of other stuff aside from bagels here, including a full range of sandwiches and wraps. Breakfast time is busy time, with banana-walnut pancakes especially popular. But what's most important is that this is one of the area's few sources of the real, New York-style water bagel: crunchy outside, challengingly chewy inside. \$

Bulldog Barbecue/Bulldog Burger

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-940-9655

These adjacent restaurants are really one place with two dining areas, since they connect and diners can order from either menu. They also share a BBQ/burger master: Top Chef

contender Howie Kleinberg, whose indoor electric smoker produces mid-tasting 'cue ranging from the expected pulled pork, ribs, brisket, and chicken to more unusual items like hot-smoked salmon. As for burgers, many feature unique ingredients such as mayo flavored like red-eye gravy, with strong coffee, or the bun of the infamous Luther: a sweet-glazed mock (holeless) Krispy Kreme donut. Costs are comparatively high, but such is the price of fame. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Cane à Sucre

899 NE 125th St., 305-891-0123

From the Vega brothers (who pioneered the Design and MiMo districts with, respectively, the original Cane A Sucre and UVA 69), this charming artisanal sandwich bar is the perfect breakfast/lunch stop before or after ingesting visual arts at nearby MOMA. Actually, creations like El Fig (fig confit, gorgonzola cheese, walnuts, and honey on an authentically French crisp-crustured fresh-baked baguette) are art in their own right. Inventive, substantial salads, sides, daily soups, and homemade sweets (including mouthwateringly buttery croissants) complete the menu. \$\$\$

Captain Jim's Seafood

12950 W. Dixie Hwy.,

305-892-2812

This market/restaurant was garnering critical acclaim even when eat-in dining was confined to a few Formica tables in front of the fish counter, owing to the freshness of its seafood, much of it from Capt. Jim Hanson's own fishing boats, which supply many top restaurants. Now there's a casual but pleasantly nautical side dining room with booths. Whether it's garlicky scampi, smoked-fish dip, grilled yellowtail or hog or mutton snapper, perfectly tenderized cracked conch or conch fritters, everything is deftly prepared and bargain-priced. \$\$

Caminito Way

1960 NE 123rd St., 305-893-8322

Open since 1999, this bakery-café is particularly known for its European-influenced homemade Argentine pastries. So come early to pick from the widest variety of savory empanadas (plumply stuffed and admirably delicate – no leaden crusts here) or sweet facturas (Argentina's most popular breakfast items). They sell out fast. What some might not know is that despite its small size, Caminito's also crafts tasty big food: elaborate salads; hefty baguette sandwiches, like choripan sausage with chimichurri; pastas; major meat or poultry entrées. For lighter lunches, try tartas (quiches), also perfect party food. \$\$\$

Casa Mia Trattoria

1950 NE 123rd St., 305-899-2770

Tucked away, off to the side on the approach to the Broad Causeway and the beaches, this charming indoor/outdoor trattoria seems to attract mostly neighborhood regulars. But even newcomers feel like regulars after a few minutes, thanks to the staff's Italian ebullience. Menu offerings are mostly classic comfort foods with some contemporary items as well. Housemade pastas are good enough that low-carb dieters should take a break, especially for the tender gnocchi with pesto or better yet, delicate fagottini – “beggar's purses” stuffed with pears and cheese. \$\$\$

Chéen-huyae

15400 Biscayne Blvd., 305-956-2808

Diners can get some Tex-Mex dishes here, if they must. But the specialty is Mayan-rooted Yucatan cuisine. So why blow bucks on burritos when one can sample Caribbean Mexico's most typical dish: cochinita pibil? Chéen's authentically succulent version of the pickle-onion-topped marinated pork dish is earthily aromatic from achote, tangy from bitter oranges, and meltingly tender from slow cooking in a banana leaf wrap. To accompany, try a lime/soy/chili-spiced michelada, also authentically Mexican, and possibly the best thing that ever happened to dark beer. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Chef Creole

13105 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-893-4246

(See Miami listing)

Evio's Pizza & Grill

12600 Biscayne Blvd., 305-899-7699

Family-owned and operated, this indoor/outdoor pizzeria is also family-friendly, right down to the size of its NY-style pies (sold whole or by the slice), which range from large to roughly the diameter of a ferris wheel. And toppings, ranging from meat-lovers to veggie-loaded, are applied with awe-inspiring abundance. Since tastes do vary, the menu also includes a cornucopia of other crowd-pleasers: burgers (including turkey with a unique mustard-spiked cranberry sauce), entrée-size salads, burritos or quesadillas, wings, hot or cold subs and succulent self-basted lamb/beef gyros with tzatziki. \$

Fish Fish

13488 Biscayne Blvd., 786-732-3124

Here's what makes this elegantly warm restolounge and seafood market not just an irresistible neighborhood draw but a worth-the-drive dining destination: Both local and cold-water fish and shellfish, including stone crab and lobster from owners Melvyn Franks and Rebecca Nachlas's own Florida Keys plant, that are always fresh, never frozen (except some shrimp). For home cooks, the market offers all delivered-daily catches on the menu. But don't miss chef Oscar Quezada's simple and perfect preparations, including lightly battered, crispy tempura shrimp; sophisticated fish and chips (featuring Atlantic cod, not cheapo fish); bracing ceviches; and, for carnivores, shepherd's pie topped with ethereal whipped potatoes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Flip Burger Bar

1699 NE 123rd St., 305-741-3547

Casual-chic burger bars, everywhere in South Beach, are still rare farther north. One reason this easy-to-miss venue is a must-not-miss for North Miami locals: The hefty half-pounders on fresh brioche buns include a scrumptious patty with Gruyere, mushrooms, and onion marmalade. The Fireman is a jalapeño/chipotle scorchier. There are even turkey and veggie variations. Other draws are hand-cut fries, beer-battered onion rings, a top-drawer beer list, budget-priced combo specials, conversation-friendly acoustics, and a South Beach rarity: free parking. \$\$\$

Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Giraffas

1821 NE 123rd St., 786-866-9007
Festooned with eye-poppingly colored panels and giraffes – subtler but everywhere – this first North American branch of a wildly popular, 30-year-old Brazilian fast/casual chain is the flagship of a planned 4000 U.S. Giraffas. Given that the steaks, especially the tender, flavorful picanha, rival those at the most upscale rodizio joints – and beat the sword-wielding grandstanders for custom cooking (because staff asks your preference) – we'd bet on giraffe domination. Overstuffed grilled sandwiches, salads, even tasty veggie options are all here, too. The cheese bread is a must. \$\$

Happy Sushi & Thai

2224 NE 123rd St., 305-895-0165
Grab a booth at this cozy eatery, which serves all the expected Thai and sushi bar standards, including weekday lunch specials. But there are also delightful surprises, like grilled kawahagi (triggerfish) with seasoned Japanese mayonnaise. This intensely savory/sweet "Japanese home cooking" treat satisfies the same yen as beef jerky, except without pulling out your teeth. Accompanied by a bowl of rice, it's a superb lunch. For raw-fish fans, spicy, creamy salmon tartare (accompanied by hiyashi wakame seaweed) is a winner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Here Comes the Sun

2188 NE 123rd St., 305-893-5711
At this friendly natural foods establishment, one of Miami's first, there's a full stock of vitamins and nutritional supplements. But the place's hearty soups, large variety of entrées (including fresh fish and chicken as well as vegetarian selections), lighter bites like miso burgers with secret "sun sauce" (which would probably make old sneakers taste good), and daily specials are a tastier way to get healthy. An under-ten-buck early-bird dinner is popular with the former long-hair, now blue-hair, crowd. Frozen yogurt, fresh juices, and smoothies complete the menu. \$-\$\$

Il Piccolo Café

2112 NE 123rd St., 305-893-6538
Talk about a neighborhood institution. The owners of this longtime Italian eatery remember frequent visits from Miami native Michelle Bernstein and her parents – when the celebrity chef was a kid. The place is still child-friendly, and though the "piccolo" space is indeed small, portions are prodigious. Most dishes will evoke nostalgia, including our own favorite white-wine-sauce-drenched sin – lemony egg-battered veal piccata with capers and artichokes. But there are surprises not found at most old school red-sauce joints, too, like lunchtime's surprisingly tasty Cuban sandwich. \$\$

Le Griot de Madame John

975 NE 125th St., 305-892-9333
When Madame moved her base of operations from her Little Haiti home to a real restaurant (though a very informal one, and still mostly take-out), she began offering numerous traditional Haitian dishes, including jerked beef or goat tassot and an impressive poisson gros sel (a whole fish rubbed with salt before poaching with various veggies and spices). But the dish that still packs the place is the griot: marinated pork chunks simmered and then fried till they're moistly tender inside, crisp and intensely flavored outside. \$

Little Havana

12727 Biscayne Blvd. 305-899-9069
In addition to white-tablecloth ambiance, this place features live Latin entertainment and dancing, making it a good choice when diners want a night out, not just a meal. It's also a good choice for diners who don't speak Spanish, but don't worry about authenticity. Classic Cuban home-style dishes like mojo-marinated lechon asado, topped with onions, and juicy ropa vieja are translated on the menu, not the plate, and fancier creations like pork filet in tangy tamarind sauce seem universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Los Antojos

11099 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-1411
If it's Sunday, it must be sancocho de gallina, Colombia's national dish. If it's Saturday, it must be ajiaco. Both are thick chicken soups, full meals in a bowl. For Colombian-cuisine novices, a bandeja paisa (sampler including rice, beans, carne asada, chicharron, eggs, sautéed sweet plantains, and an arepa corn cake) is available every day, as are antojitos – "little whims," smaller snacks like chorizo con arepa (a corn cake with Colombian sausage). And for noncarnivores there are several hefty seafood platters, made to order. \$\$

Mama Jennie's

11720 NE 2nd Ave. 305-757-3627
For more than 35 years this beloved red-sauce joint has been drawing students and other starvation-budget diners with prodigious portions of lasagna, spaghetti and meatballs (the latter savory yet light-textured), veal marsala topped with a mountain of mushrooms, and other Italian-American belly-busters. All pasta or meat entrées come with oil-drenched garlic rolls and either soup (hearty minestrone) or a salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, cukes, brined olives, and pickled peppers) that's a dinner in itself. Rustic roadside ambiance, notably the red leatherette booths, add to Mama's charm. \$-\$\$

Pastry Is Art

12591 Biscayne Blvd., 305-640-5045
Given owner Jenny Rissone's background as the Eden Roc's executive pastry chef, it's not surprising that her cakes and other sweet treats (like creamy one-bite truffle "lollipops") look as flawlessly sophisticated as they taste – perfect adult party fare. What the bakery's name doesn't reveal is that it's also a breakfast and lunch café, with unusual baking-oriented fare: a signature sandwich of chicken, brie, and caramelized peaches and pecans on housemade bread; quiches; pot pies; even a baked-to-order Grand Marnier soufflé. The pecan sticky buns are irresistible. \$\$

Petit Rouge

12409 Biscayne Blvd., 305-892-7676
From the mid-1990s (with Neal's Restaurant and later with Il Migliore), local chef Neal Cooper's neighborhood-oriented Italian eateries have been crowd-pleasers. While this cute 32-seat charmer is French, it's no exception, avoiding pretense and winning fans with both classic and nouvelle bistro fare: frisee salad with lardons, poached egg, and bacon vinaigrette;

truite Grenobloise (trout with lemon/caper sauce); consommé with black truffles and foie gras, covered by a buttery puff pastry dome; perfect pommes frites, and equally perfect apple or lemon tarts for dessert. \$\$\$

Rice House of Kabob

14480 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-4899
Since 2006, South Beach's original Rice House has been serving up mountainous platters of basmati rice and Greek salad topped with Persian-style marinated/char-grilled meat, poultry, seafood, or veggie kabobs – for very little money. This branch of what is now a growing chain has the same menu (which also features wraps, for lighter eaters) and the same policy of custom-cooking kabobs, so expect fresh, not fast, food. Sides of must-o-keyar and must-o-mooseer (thick yogurt dips with herbed cukes or shallots) are must-haves. \$\$

Smashburger

14730 Biscayne Blvd., 786-406-6614
Two things distinguish the griddled patties of this Denver-based chain, touted as "the nation's fastest-growing 'better burger' restaurant," from other better burgers: a nod to local tastes (like toppings of fried chorizo and potato fritas), and the smashing technique, producing an appealing thickly crusted exterior. Got burger overkill? Substitute chicken, or have a salad. An added draw: unusual veggie sides, which go beyond regular and sweet potato fries to crisp onion strings, "veggie fritas" (carrots, string beans), and an Old South fish-camp classic: fried pickles. \$\$\$

Steve's Pizza

12101 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-0202
At the end of a debauched night of excess, some paper-thin designer pizza with wisps of smoked salmon (or similar fluff) doesn't do the trick. Open till 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., Steve's has, since 1974, been serving the kind of comforting, retro pizzas people crave at that hour. As in Brooklyn, tomato sauce is sweet, with strong oregano flavor. Mozzarella is applied with abandon. Toppings are stuff that give strength: pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, onions, and peppers. \$

Tiny Thai House

12953 Biscayne Blvd., 305-895-1646
The space is tiny. The menu, which features Thai specialties but includes sushi plus Japanese appetizers and entrées, is not. Despite the huge selection of sushi/Thai restaurant standards, though, don't overlook items harder to find in America, like "floating noodle" soup, a popular street food from Thailand's boat-based market stalls; similar in savor to Vietnamese pho, the dish contains beef, bean sprouts, and noodles heaped in umami-rich beef broth. Among the nicely priced sushi selections, the Mylo roll (tuna, salmon, crab, avocado, and cuke, topped with tempura fish and eel sauce) is a tasty pick. Don't miss sticky rice with mango for dessert. \$

Wong's Chinese Restaurant

12420 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-4313
The menu reads like a textbook on how to please everyone, with food ranging from traditional Chinese to Chinese-American to just plain American. Appetizers include honey garlic chicken wings or Buffalo wings. A crab-claw starter comes with choice of pork fried rice or French fries. Seafood lovers can get shrimp chop suey, or salty pepper shrimp (authentically shell-on). And New Yorkers will find a number of dishes that are mainstays of Manhattan Szechuan menus but not common in Miami: cold sesame noodles, Hunan chicken, twice-cooked pork. \$\$

Woody's Famous Steak Sandwich

13105 Biscayne Blvd., 305-891-1451
The griddle has been fired up since 1954 at this nostalgic hangout. New owners have made some changes, including a décor/ambiance upgrade (there's now a patio lounge, with music) and an expanded menu featuring contemporary comfort foods like fire-grilled pizzas with fresh toppings (homemade mozzarella, etc.), several salads, and veggie burgers. But time-tested road food favorites remain: big beef burgers, hot dogs, and of course, Woody's famous cheeesteak, done traditional Philly-style with shaved ribeye. You can even get Cheese Whiz. To drink, there are nine draft beers plus old-school shakes. \$\$

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Bamboo Garden

1232 NE 163rd St., 305-945-1722
Big enough for a banquet (up to 300 guests), this veteran is many diners' favorite on the 163rd/167th Street "Chinatown" strip because of its superior décor. But the menu also offers well-prepared, authentic dishes like peppery black bean clams, sautéed mustard greens, and steamed whole fish with ginger and scallions, plus Chinese-American egg foo young. Default spicing is mild even in Szechuan dishes marked with red-chili icons, but don't worry; realizing some like it hot, the chefs will customize spiciness to heroic heat levels upon request. \$\$

Blue Marlin Fish House

2500 NE 163rd St., 305-957-8822
Located inside Oleta River State Park, this casual outdoor eatery is a rare surprise for nature lovers. The featured item is still the house-smoked fish this historic venue began producing in 1938, available in three varieties: salmon, mahi mahi, and the signature blue marlin. But the smokehouse now also turns out ribs and delectable brisket. Other new additions include weekend fish fries. Entry is directly from 163rd Street, not through the main park entrance. No admission fee. \$

Chipotle Mexican Grill

14776 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2779
Proving that national fast-food chains don't have to be bad for either diners or the environment, Chipotle serves what the company calls "food with integrity." The fare is simple, basically tacos and big burritos: soft flour or crisp corn to tortillas stuffed with chipotle-marinated steak or chicken chunks, bolder shredded beef barbacoa, or herb-scented pork carnitas. But these bites contain no evil ingredients (transfats, artificial color/flavor, antibiotics, growth hormones). And the food, while not the authentic Mex street stuff dreams are made of, is darned tasty, too. \$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Cholo's Ceviche & Grill

1127 NE 163rd St., 305-947-3338

Don't be misled by the mini-mall location, or the relatively minimal prices (especially during lunch, when specials are under \$6). Inside, the décor is charming, and the Peruvian plates elegant in both preparation and presentation. Tops among ceviches/tiraditos is the signature Cholo's, marinated octopus and fish in a refined rocoto chili sauce with overtones both fiery and fruity. And don't miss the molded causis, whipped potato rings stuffed with avocado-garnished crab salad – altogether lighter and lovelier than the tasty but oily mashed spud constructions more oft encountered in town. \$-\$

Christine's Roti Shop

16721 NE 6th Ave., 305-770-0434

Wraps are for wimps. At this small shop run by Christine Gouvela, originally from British Guyana, the wrapper is a far more substantial and tasty roti, a Caribbean mega-crepe made from chickpea flour. Most popular filling for the flatbread is probably jerk chicken, bone-in pieces in a spiced stew of potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, and more chickpeas. But there are about a dozen other curries from which to choose. Take-out packages of plain roti are also available; they transform myriad leftovers into tasty, portable lunches. \$

Duffy's Sports Grill

Intracoastal Mall
3969 NE 163rd St., 305-760-2124

Located in a sprawling indoor/outdoor space at the Intracoastal Mall, Duffy's, part of a popular chain that identifies as the official sports grill of every major Miami team, features roughly a zillion TVs and an equally mega-size menu of accessibly Americanized, globally inspired dishes designed to please crowds: stuffed potato skins, crab Rangoon, coconut-crusted fish fingers with orange-ginger sauce, jumbo wings of many flavors. Imagine a sports-oriented Cheesecake Factory. What makes this particular Duffy's different and better? Location, location, location – fronting the Intracoastal Waterway. There's even a swimming pool with its own bar. \$-\$-\$

Empire Szechuan Gourmet of NY

3427 NE 163rd St., 305-949-3318

In the 1980s, Empire became the Chinese chain that swallowed Manhattan – and transformed public perceptions of Chinese food in the NY metropolitan area. Before: bland faux-Cantonese dishes. After: lighter, more fiery fare from Szechuan and other provinces. This Miami outpost does serve chop suey and other Americanized items, but don't worry. Stick with Szechuan crispy prawns, Empire's Special Duck, cold sesame noodles, or similar pleasantly spicy specialties, and you'll be a happy camper, especially if you're an ex-New Yorker. \$\$

El Gran Inka

3155 NE 163rd St., 305-940-4910

Though diners at this upscale Peruvian eatery will find ceviches, a hefty fried-seafood jalea, and Peru's other expected

traditional specialties, all presented far more elegantly than most in town, the contemporary Peruvian fusion creations are unique. Especially recommended are two dishes adapted from recipes by Peru's influential nikkei (Japanese/Creole) chef Rosita Yimura: an exquisite, delicately sauced tiradito de corvina, and for those with no fear of cholesterol, pulpo de oliva (octopus topped with rich olive sauce). \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Ginza Japanese Buffet

16153 Biscayne Blvd., 305-944-2192

Highlighting the lunch and dinners spreads at this all-you-can-eat Japanese buffet are a hibachi station (where chefs custom-cook diners' choice of seafood or meat), plus many types of maki rolls and individual nigiri sushi, both featuring a larger variety of seafood than at many sushi bars – not just salmon and tuna but snapper, escolar, surf clam, snow crab, and more. But there are also steam-tabled hot Japanese and Chinese dishes; an array of cold shellfish and salads with mix-and-match sauces; and desserts. Selections vary, but value-for-money is a given. \$\$

Green House Organic Food Restaurant

3207 NE 163rd St., 305-594-6787

The name sounds a bit healthfoody, but there's no crunchy granola here. Argentine-born, globally traveling chef Marcelo Marino, who's also an instructor at Le Cordon Bleu Miami, uses only organic and/or sustainable produce and proteins to serve upscale avant-garde fusion fare: halibut atop traditional French Nantua (creamy lobster) sauce, with lemongrass/saffron-infused faro risotto; octopus with delicate black radish tempura and coconut/pineapple/tea foam; and similar stuff requiring mad skills in both classic cooking and molecular gastronomy. Breads, cheeses, and cured meats are all made in-house, too. \$\$\$

Hanna's Gourmet Diner

13951 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2255

When Sia and Nicole Hemmati bought the Gourmet Diner from retiring original owner Jean-Pierre Lejeune in the late 1990s, they added "Hanna's" to the name, but changed little else about this retro-looking French/American diner, a north Miami-Dade institution since 1983. Customers can get a cheeseburger or garlicky escargots, meatloaf in tomato sauce or boeuf bourguignon in red wine sauce, iceberg lettuce and tomatoes, or a mushroom and squid salad with garlic dressing. For oysters Rockefeller/tuna-melt couples from Venus and Mars, it remains the ideal dinner date destination. \$\$\$-\$

Hiro Japanese Restaurant

3007 NE 163rd St., 305-948-3687

One of Miami's first sushi restaurants, Hiro retains an amusing retro-glam feel, an extensive menu of both sushi and cooked Japanese food, and late hours that make it a perennially popular after-hours snack stop. The sushi menu has few surprises, but quality is reliable. Most exceptional are the nicely priced yakitori, skewers of succulently soy-glazed and grilled meat, fish, and vegetables; the unusually large variety available of the last makes this place a good choice for vegetarians. \$\$

Hiro's Sushi Express

17048 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-949-0776

Tiny, true, but there's more than just sushi at this mostly take-out spin-off of the pioneering Hiro. Makis are the mainstay (standard stuff like California rolls, more complex creations like multi-veg futomaki, and a few unexpected treats like a spicy Crunch & Caliente maki), available à la carte or in value-priced individual and party combo platters. But there are also bento boxes featuring tempura, yakitori skewers, teriyaki, stir-fried veggies, and udon noodles. Another branch is now open in Miami's Upper Eastside. \$

Heelsa

1550 NE 164th St., 305-919-8393

If unusual Bangladeshi dishes like fiery pumpkin patee (cooked with onion, green pepper, and pickled mango) or Heelsa curry (succulently spiced hilsa, Bangladesh's sweet-fleshed national fish) seem familiar, it's because chef/owner Bithi Begum and her husband Tipu Raman once served such fare at the critically acclaimed Renaissa. Their menu's mix-and-match option allows diners to pair their choice of meat, poultry, fish, or vegetable with more than a dozen regional sauces, from familiar Indian styles to exotica like satkara, flavored with a Bangladeshi citrus reminiscent of sour orange. \$\$\$-\$

Jerusalem Market and Deli

16275 Biscayne Blvd., 305-948-8080

Specialties like shawarma, spinach pies, kebabs, hummus, and kibbeh (a savory mix of ground lamb and bulgur) are native to many Middle East countries, but when a Lebanese chef/owner, like this eatery's Sam Elzoor, is at the helm, you can expect extraordinary refinement. There are elaborate daily specials here, like lemon chicken or stuffed cabbage with a variety of sides, but even a common falafel sandwich is special when the pita is also stuffed with housemade cabbage and onion salads, plus unusually rich and tart tahina. \$\$\$

Kabobji

3055 NE 163rd St., 305-354-8484

This place makes a very good tahini sauce. In fact that alone is reason enough to visit. We prefer ours with this bright, cheery eatery's delightfully oniony falafel or a veg-garnished wrap of thin-sliced marinated beef schwarma. They also do a beautifully spiced, and reassuringly fresh-tasting, raw kibbi naye (Middle Eastern steak tartare). It's hard to resist putting together a grazing meal of starters and wraps, but there's also a roster of full entrées (with soup or salad plus starch), including tempting vegetarian and seafood meals for noncarnivores. \$\$

Kebab Indian Restaurant

514 NE 167th St., 305-940-6309

Since the 1980s this restaurant, located in an unatmospheric mini strip mall but surprisingly romantic inside (especially if you grab one of the exotically draped booths) has been a popular destination for reasonably priced north Indian fare. Kormas are properly soothing and vindaloes are satisfactorily searing, but the kitchen will adjust seasonings upon request. They aim to please. Food arrives unusually fast for an Indian eatery, too. \$\$

King Palace

330 NE 167th St. 305-949-2339

The specialties here are authentic Chinatown-style barbecue (whole ducks, roast pork strips, and more, displayed in a glass case by the door), and fresh seafood dishes, the best made with the live fish swimming in two tanks by the dining room entrance. There's also a better-than-average selection of seasonal Chinese veggies. The menu is extensive, but the best ordering strategy, since the place is usually packed with Asians, is to see what looks good on nearby tables, and point. \$\$

Kings County Pizza

18228 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-792-9455

If your feelings about Brooklyn-style pizza have been formed by Domino's flopsy-crust, ketchup, cheese-foody pies, stop here to sample a slice of the real thing. Admittedly, the crusts are not those of the coal-fired classics from Brooklyn's legendary Totono's or Grimaldi's, but they're similarly medium-thin and crisp – though not like a cracker; you can fold them for neat street eating, and they taste like honest bread, not cardboard. A variety of toppings are available even on slices. There are also whole pies with varied toppings. The "large" is humongous. \$-\$

KoneFood

387 NE 167th St., 305-705-4485

Cones contain ice cream. Kones, however, contain anything and everything edible – at least at this eatery, locally founded (though the original concept of ultimate portable

convenience meals, in sealed flatbread cones, came from Italy). In their melting-pot American version, kone fillings range from breakfast items like huevos rancheros to Thai chicken, chicken curry, coconut shrimp, cones kon lechon (slow-roasted pork with mojo), various pizzas, BBQ, chicken Florentine, healthy green salads, more. There are even desserts like a flambéed apple Kone à la Normande. Authentic Belgian frites, too. \$

Lime Fresh Mexican Grill

14831 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-8800

(See Midtown / Wynwood / Design District listing)

Laurenzo's Market Café

16385 W. Dixie Hwy., 305-945-6381

It's just a small area between the wines and the fridge counters – no potted palms, and next-to-no service in this cafeteria-style space. But when negotiating this international gourmet market's packed shelves and crowds has depleted your energies, it's a handy place to refuel with eggplant parmesan and similar Italian-American classics, housemade from old family recipes. Just a few spoonfuls of Wednesday's hearty pasta fagi-ole, one of the daily soup specials, could keep a person shopping for hours. And now that pizza master Carlo is manning the wood-fired oven, you can sample the thinnest, crispiest pies outside Napoli. \$\$\$

Little Saigon

16752 N. Miami Ave., 305-653-3377

This is Miami's oldest traditional Vietnamese restaurant, but it's still packed most weekend nights. So even the place's biggest negative – its hole-in-the-wall atmosphere, not encouraging of lingering visits – becomes a plus since it ensures fast turnover. Chef/owner Lily Tao is typically in the kitchen, crafting green papaya salad, flavorful beef noodle pho (served with greens, herbs, and condiments that make it not just a soup but a whole ceremony), and many other Vietnamese classics. The menu is humongous. \$\$\$

The Melting Pot

15700 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-2228

For 1950s and 1960s college students, fondue pots were standard dorm accessories. These days, however, branches of this chain are generally the only places to go for this eating experience. Start with a wine-enriched four-cheese fondue; proceed to an entrée with meat or seafood, plus choice of cooking potion (herbed wine, bouillon, or oil); finish with fruits and cakes dipped in melted chocolate. Fondue etiquette dictates that diners who drop a skewer in the pot must kiss all other table companions, so go with those you love. \$\$\$

New China Buffet

940 North Miami Beach Blvd., 305-957-7266

The venue (a former Bennigan's) is clean, casual, and not kitschy. The all-you-can-eat fare is voluminous – scores of Chinese dishes (recommended: Mongolian pork, spicy garlic shrimp, and surprisingly authentic steamed fish with ginger and scallion); international oddities (pizza, plantains, pigs-in-blankets); plus sushi, salad, and pastry/ice cream bars. And the price is sure right. Lunch is \$6.75 (\$7.75 Saturday and Sunday). Dinner features more seafood, \$9.55. There's an inexpensive take-out option, too, and reduced kids' prices. \$

Oishi Thai

14841 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4338

At this stylish Thai/sushi spot, try the menu of specials, many of which clearly reflect the young chef's fanatical devotion to fresh fish, as well as the time he spent in the kitchen of Knob: broiled miso-marinated black cod; rock shrimp tempura with creamy sauce; even Nobu Matsuhisa's "new style sashimi" (slightly surface-seared by drizzles of hot olive and sesame oil). The specials menu includes some Thai-inspired creations, too, such as veal massaman curry, Chilean sea bass curry, and sizzling filet mignon with basil sauce. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Panya Thai

520 NE 167th St., 305-945-8566

Unlike authentic Chinese cuisine, there's no shortage of genuine Thai food in and around Miami. But Panya's chef/owner, a Bangkok native, offers numerous regional and/or rare dishes not found elsewhere. Plus he doesn't automatically curtail the heat or sweetness levels to please Americans. Among the most intriguing: moo khem phad wan (chewy deep-fried seasoned pork strips with fiery tamarind dip, accompanied by crisp green papaya salad); broad rice noodles stir-fried with eye-opening chili/garlic sauce and fresh Thai basil; and chili-topped Diamond Duck in tangy tamarind sauce. \$\$\$-\$

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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

Paquito's

16265 Biscayne Blvd.,
305-947-5027

From the outside, this strip-mall Mexican eatery couldn't be easier to overlook. Inside, however, its festivity is impossible to resist. Every inch of wall space seems to be covered with South of the Border knickknacks. And if the kitschy décor alone doesn't cheer you, the quickly arriving basket of fresh (not packaged) taco chips, or the mariachi band, or the knockout margaritas will. Food ranges from Tex-Mex burritos and a party-size fajita platter to authentic Mexican moles and harder-to-find traditional preparations like albóndigas – spicy, ultra-savory meatballs. \$\$-\$\$\$

Racks Soprano Café & Italian Restaurant

3933 NE 163rd St. (Intracoastal Mall), 305-917-7225

Racks has a new owner and a new name. Italian chef Rocco Soprano is bringing his authentic Italian flavors and style to a lovely setting. We'll have more details next month, but we know the specialties include Italian steaks, seafood, and an oyster bar. One thing that won't change: the coal-fired pizza oven, which reliably turns out an astonishingly light yet chewy crust that makes the pies a revelation. Especially enjoyable is the waterfront deck. \$\$

Roasters & Toasters

18515 NE 18th Ave.,
305-830-3354

Attention ex-New Yorkers: Is your idea of food porn one of the Carnegie Deli's mile-high pastrami sandwiches? Well, Roasters will dwarf them. Consider the "Carnegie-style" monster containing, according to the menu, a full pound of succulent meat (really 1.4 pounds; we weighed it), for a mere 15 bucks. All the other Jewish deli classics are here too, including perfectly sour pickles, silky hand-sliced nova or lox, truly red-rare roast beef, and the cutest two-bite mini-potato pancakes ever – eight per order, served with sour cream and applesauce. \$\$

Sang's Chinese Restaurant

1925 NE 163rd St., 305-947-7076

Sang's has three menus. The pink menu is Americanized Chinese food, from chop suey to honey garlic chicken. The white menu permits the chef to show off his authentic Chinese fare: salt and pepper prawns, rich beef/turnip casserole, tender salt-baked chicken, even estrofica like abalone with sea cucumber. The extensive third menu offers dim sum, served until 4:00 p.m. A live tank allows seasonal seafood dishes like lobster with ginger and scallion. Recently installed: a Chinese barbecue case, displaying savory items like crispy pork with crackling attached. \$\$\$

Shing Wang Vegetarian, Isee & Tea House

237 NE 167th St., 305-654-4008

At this unique, mostly Taiwanese eatery, all seafood, poultry, and meats used to be skillfully crafted and delicious vegetarian imitations. These are still here, plus there's now a wider choice of dishes, some featuring real meat. Try the authentic-tasting Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches (available with a variety of meat and mock-meat fillings). Bubble tea is the must-not-miss drink. The cold, refreshing boba comes in numerous flavors, all supplemented with signature black tapioca balls that, sipped through straws, are a guaranteed giggle. \$

Siam Square

54 NE 167th St., 305-944-9697

Open until 1:00 a.m. every day except Sunday (when it closes at midnight), this relatively new addition to North Miami Beach's "Chinatown" strip has become a popular late-night gathering spot for chefs from other Asian restaurants. And why not? The food is fresh, nicely presented, and reasonably priced. The kitchen staff is willing to customize dishes upon request, and the serving staff is reliably fast. Perhaps most important, karaoke equipment is in place when the mood strikes. \$\$-\$

Slices Pizza & Pasta

13750 Biscayne Blvd., 305-949-5684

While pizza by the slice is common street food in every city in the USA, this informal Italian eatery offers a variation particularly appropriate to Latin American-influenced Miami: slices served rodizio-style. Brazil's traditional rodizio restaurants feature many different grilled meats, served tableside by a continuing parade of waiters till diners cry uncle. Here the concept is the same, with dozens of varieties of pizza (plus several pastas) replacing the beef. \$\$

Sports Grill

2995 NE 163rd St., 305-944-4552

Like the other five locations of this popular local mini chain (which originated more than 20 years ago), NMB's

family-friendly sports bar/grill has walls lined with flat-screen TVs and a menu packed with all the classic game-watching munchies, some with Old South twists, like jalapeño poppers with pepper jelly dipping sauce. Must-haves are the char-broiled "special wings," meaty and mild. But for those who prefer more highly spiced wings, there are six additional varieties. Cool down with a craft beer from a list that changes weekly to avoid boredom. \$\$-\$

Sushi House

15911 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-6002

In terms of décor drama, this sushi spot seems to have taken its cue from Philippe Starck: sheer floor-to-ceiling drapes, for starters. The sushi list, too, is over the top, featuring monster makis like the Cubbie Comfort: spicy tuna, soft-shell crab, shrimp and eel tempura, plus avocado, jalapeños, and cilantro, topped with not one but three sauces: wasabi, teriyaki, and spicy Mayo. Hawaiian King Crab contains unappreciated ingredients like tomatoes, green peppers, and pineapple. Boutique wines, artisan sakes, and cocktails are as exotic as the cuisine. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Sushi Sake

13551 Biscayne Blvd., 305-947-4242

Chic Asian-accented décor, video screens, 99-cent drink deals, and late-night hours make this hip hangout not just a sushi bar but sort of a neighborhood bar, too. That said, the sushi is impressive, mainly because seafood is delivered daily and all except the shrimp is fresh, not frozen (as is customary at most Miami sushi places). Also notable: all sauces are housemade. Cooked makis like a crutch-topped Miami Heat are most popular, but it's as sashimi that the fish's freshness truly shines. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

Tania's Table

18685 W. Dixie Hwy.,
305-932-9425

A location at the tail end of a tiny, tired-looking strip mall makes this weekday lunch-only kosher eatery easy to miss. But the cute bistro, an extension of chef Tania Sigal's catering company, is well worth seeking for its unusually varied daily-changing menus – not just familiar Eastern European-derived dishes (chicken matzoh ball soup, blintzes, etc.) but numerous Latin American specialties (zesty ropa vieja), Asian-influenced items (Thai chicken/noodle salad), lightened universal Ladies-Who-Lunch classics (custardy quiches, grilled trout with mustard sauce), and homemade baked goods. \$\$

Tuna's

17850 W. Dixie Hwy.,
305-932-0630

www.tunasrawbarandgrille.com
The reincarnated Tuna's has gained new owners, a new name, a dazzling outdoor bar and dining area, and a new chef, Rolf Fellhauer, who spent 28 years at the famed La Paloma. He has added his touch to the menu, with delicacies such as Oysters Moscovo, mussels Chardonnay, and Grouper Brittany. Traditional house favorites remain, and the emphasis is still on fresh fish from local waters. Open daily till 2:00 a.m., the place can get rather festive after midnight, but since the kitchen is open till closing, Tuna's draws a serious late-night dining crowd, too. \$\$-\$\$\$

Vegetarian Restaurant by Hakin

73 NE 167th St.,
305-405-6346

Too often purist vegetarian food is unskillfully crafted bland stuff, spiced with little but sanctimonious intent. Not at this modest-looking vegan (dairy-free vegetarian) restaurant and smoothie bar. Dishes from breakfast's blueberry-packed pancakes to Caribbean vegetable stews sparkle with vivid flavors. Especially impressive: mock meat (and fake fish) wheat-gluten items that beat many carnivorous competitors. Skeptical? Rightly. But we taste-tested a "Philly cheese steak" sandwich on the toughest of critics – an inflexibly burger-crazy six year-old. She cleaned her plate. \$\$

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 (wilting spinach, chilled and dressed in sesame sauce), garlic stem and beef (mild young shoots flash-fried with tender steak bits), or perhaps just-caught grouper with hot/sweet/tangy chili sauce. Open till around 3:00 a.m. \$\$

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Asia Bay Bistro

1007 Kane Concourse, 305-861-2222

As in Japan's most refined restaurants, artful presentation is stunning at this Japanese/Thai gem. And though the voluminous menu sports all the familiar favorites from both nations, the Japanese-inspired small plates will please diners seeking something different. Try jalapeño-sauced hamachi sashimi; toro with enoki mushrooms, bracing ooba (shiso), tobiko caviar, and a sauce almost like beurre blanc; rock shrimp/shitake tempura with a delicate salad; elegant salmon tartare with a mix-in quail egg. And spicy, mayo-dressed tuna rock makis are universal crowd-pleasers. \$\$\$

Betto's Ristorante Italiano

1009 Kane Concourse, 305-861-8166

After roughly 25 years as Caffè Da Vinci, this romantic remodeled, renamed space is now managed by Betto Di Carlo, also a 25-year Italian cuisine veteran (as former owner/effusively charming host of Surfside's neighborhood favorite Café Ragazzi). Best make reservations. Though off the tourist track, the place draws hungry hordes for homemade pastas like pappardelle ai porcini (footsome wide noodles with fresh mushrooms). Veal piccata, lightly floured and sautéed medallions with a caper-studded lemon white wine sauce, and thicker mozzarella-stuffed chops are also popular. \$\$\$

Le Pine

1052 Kane Concourse, 305-861-1059

This upscale Lebanese restaurant serves dishes with the sort of understated sophistication that makes clear why Beirut was called the Paris of the East. You'll find familiar Middle Eastern favorites, but many have refinements that lift them above average: pita that's housemade, charmingly fluffy when warm from the oven; falafel incorporating flavorful fava beans with the usual ground chickpeas. Especially appealing are more uncommon items like crisp-fried cauliflower with tahini, feteh (a chickpea casserole "iced" with thick yogurt), and buttery cheese/herb-filled samosasak pastries. Finish exotically with a hookah. \$\$-\$\$\$

Open Kitchen

1071 95th St., 305-865-0090

If we were on Death Row, choosing a last meal, this very chef-centered luncheon/market's PBLT (a BLT sandwich with melt-in-your-mouth pork belly substituting for regular bacon) would be a strong contender. Co-owners Sandra Stefani (ex-Casa Toscana chef/owner) and Ines Chattas (ex-Icebox Café GM) have combined their backgrounds to create a global gourmet oasis with a menu ranging from light quiches and imaginative salads to hefty balsamic/tomato-glazed shortribs or daily pasta specials (like wild boar-stuffed ravioli). Also featured: artisan grocery products, and Stefani's famous interactive cooking class/wine dinners. \$\$-\$\$\$

The Palm

9650 E. Bay Harbor Dr., 305-868-7256

It was 1930s journalists, legend has it, who transformed NYC's original Palm from Italian restaurant to bastion of beef. Owners would run out to the butcher for huge steaks to satisfy the hardboiled scribes. So our perennial pick here is nostalgic: steak à la stone – juicy, butter-doused slices on toast, topped with sautéed onions and pimientos. This classic (whose carb components make it satisfying without à la carte sides, and hence a relative bargain) isn't on the menu anymore, but cooks will prepare it on request. \$\$\$\$

AVENTURA / HALLANDALE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

17901 Biscayne Blvd., 305-830-2625

When people rave about New York pizzas' superiority, they don't just mean thin crusts. They mean the kind of airy, abundantly burn-bubbled, uniquely flavorful crusts that can only be consistently produced by a traditional coal (not wood) oven – like those at Anthony's, which began with one Fort Lauderdale pizzeria in 2002 and now has roughly 30 locations. Quality toppings, though limited, hit all the major food groups, from prosciutto to kalamata olives. There are salads, too, but the sausage and garlic-sautéed broccoli rabe pie is a tastier green vegetable. \$\$

Bagel Cove Restaurant & Deli

19003 Biscayne Blvd. 305-935-4029

One word: flagels. And no, that's not a typo. Rather these crusty, flattened specimens (poppy seed or sesame seed) are the ultimate bagel/soft pretzel hybrid – and a specialty at this bustling Jewish bakery/deli, which, since 1988, opens at 6:30 a.m. – typically selling out of flagels in a couple of hours. Since you're up early anyway, sample elaborately garnished breakfast specials, including unusually flavorful homemade corned beef hash and eggs. For the rest of the day, multitudes of mavens devour every other delectable deli specialty known to humankind. \$\$

BagelWorks

18729 Biscayne Blvd., 305-937-7727

Hard as it is for old-time NYC expats to believe, there's evidently a younger generation that doesn't equate the Jewish deli experience with loudmouthed servers and the smell of 75 years of fermenting pickle juice in the flooring. This clean, contemporary place attracts this younger generation with the full range of classics, including many varieties of hand-sliced smoked fish, but also healthy options, most notably a wide array of substantial salads with grilled protein add-ons. Bagels, while machine-made rather than hand-rolled, are freshly baked all day. \$\$

Bella Luna

19575 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura Mall, 305-792-9330

If the menu here looks familiar, it should. It's nearly identical



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Dining Guide: RESTAURANTS

to that at the Upper Eastside's Luna Café and, with minor variations, at all the rest of Tom Billante's eateries (Rosalia, Villaggio, Carpaccio), right down to the typeface. But no argument from here. In a mall – a setting more accustomed to food court – dishes like carpaccio al salmone (crudo, with portobellos, capers, parmesan slices, and lemon/tomato dressing) and linguine carbonara (in creamy sauce with pancetta and shallots) are a breath of fresh, albeit familiar, air. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Blu Sushi 600 Silks Run Rod., 954-744-4398

Even hard-core sushi-bar addicts must admit that many such establishments suffer from a certain sameness. Not Blu. At this restolounge in the Village at Gulfstream Park, part of a mini-chain originating in southwest Florida, the specialty makis are outdone in outrageousness only by extravagant cocktails. Yes, there are California rolls. But why be bored when you have an alternative like Kin-SO: tempura king crab salad, tuna, and avocado with scallions, smelt roe, and tempura flakes, plus mayo and sweet eel sauce. \$\$\$

Bourbon Steak 19999 W. Country Club Dr., 786-279-0658 (Fairmont Hotel, Turnberry Resort)

At Bourbon Steak, a venture in the exploding restaurant empire of chef Michael Mina, a multiple James Beard award winner, steakhouse fare is just where the fare starts. There are also Mina's ingenious signature dishes, like an elegant deconstructed lobster/baby vegetable pot pie, a raw bar, and enough delectable vegetable/seafood starters and sides for noncarnivores to assemble a happy meal. But don't neglect the steak – flavorful dry-aged Angus, 100-percent Wagyu American "Kobe," swoonworthy grade A5 Japanese Kobe, and butter-poached prime rib, all cooked to perfection. \$\$\$

BurgerFi 18139 Biscayne Blvd., 305-466-0350

It's not surprising that this Florida-based "better burger" franchise is one of America's fastest-growing. With décor that's relaxingly retro yet futuristically earth-friendly (think recycled Coke bottle chairs), beverages ranging from milkshakes to craft beers, and sourced hormone/antibiotic-free, grass-fed Angus burgers on branded buns, for prices rivaling those for fast-food junkburgers, what's not to love? There are also vegetarian quinoa burgers or Kobe dogs, plus "accessories" including hand-cut fries, killer crisp-battered onion rings, freshly made, all-natural frozen custard, and toppings galore. \$

Cadillac Ranch Village at Gulfstream Park 921 Silks Run Rd. #1615, 954-456-1031

It's hard to decide if the most fun interpretation of beef here is the weekend prime rib dinner special (with two sides and a meat hunk hefty enough for sandwiches the next day) or the mechanical bull. Party like it's 1980 at this all-American restolounge/sports bar, which includes two outdoor patios with fire pits and, sometimes, live rootsy music. If you miss out on the roast beef (it goes fast), there are burgers, steaks, meal-size salads, and classic bar bites. \$\$\$

Café Bistro @ Nordstrom 19507 Biscayne Blvd. #15, 305-937-7267

In the days before quick-bite food courts, upscale department stores had their own real restaurants, civilized oases where "Ladies Who Lunch" took leisurely respite from shopping. In today's "Women Who Work" times, those restaurants (and privileged ladies) are anachronisms, but this room, hidden on Nordstrom's second floor, is a relaxing time-trip back. Enjoy creamy crab bisque, extravagant salads (shrimp with cilantro-lime dressing; pear, blue cheese, and candied walnuts with cherry balsamic vinaigrette), or a retro-modern club sandwich. Organic ingredients from local purveyors are emphasized. \$\$\$

Fresko 19048 NE 29th Ave., 786-272-3737

Forget thick, dough-wrapped potato knishes and blintzes slathered with sour cream. As its name suggests, this kosher dairy eatery eschews the starch/sugar-laden traditional favorites for salads, smoothies, and similar healthy fare as casual, clean, and contemporary as the restaurant's décor. Asian-influenced items, like wakame-topped tuna tartare with pineapple chutney, are particularly appealing, while those craving classic combinations like smoked salmon and cream cheese can enjoy them on a light-crust designer pizza. To drink, smoothies are supplemented by refreshing herbal infusions like green lemonade (with mint and basil). \$\$

Fuji Hana 2775 NE 187th St., Suite #1, 305-932-8080

A people-pleasing menu of typical Thai and Japanese dishes, plus some appealing contemporary creations (like the Spicy

Crunchy Tuna Roll, an inside-out tuna/avocado/tempura maki, topped with more tuna and served with a luscious creamy cilantro sauce) has made this eatery a longtime favorite. But vegetarians – for whom seafood-based condiments can make Asian foods a minefield – might want to add the place to their "worth a special drive" list, thanks to chefs' winning ways with tofu and all-around accommodation to veg-only diets. \$\$\$

The Grill on the Alley 19501 Biscayne Blvd. (Aventura Mall), 305-466-7195

Ensnconced in a leather booth, with dark hardwood everywhere and a massive bar dispensing two-fisted drinks, you'd never know you were dining in a shopping mall – or in the new millennium. This upscale mini chain salutes America's great grill restaurants of yesteryear, with prodigious portions of charbroiled meats and seafood, plus classics like creamy chicken pot pie. New retro dishes are added quarterly, but our favorite remains Sunday night's prime rib special: a \$32 hunk of juicy beef that'll take care of Monday's meals too. \$\$\$

II Migliore 2576 NE Miami Gardens Dr., 305-792-2902

This attractive trattoria gets the food right, as well as the ambience. As in Italy, dishes rely on impeccable ingredients and straightforward recipes that don't overcomplicate, cover up, or otherwise muck about with that perfection. Fresh fettuccine with white truffle oil and mixed wild mushrooms needs nothing else. Neither does the signature Pollo Al Mattone, marinated in herbs and cooked under a brick. And even low-carb dieters happily go to hell in a hand basket when faced with a mound of potatoes alla Toscana, herb-sprinkled French fries. \$\$\$

Kampai 3575 NE 207th St., 305-931-6410

At this longtime neighborhood favorite Japanese/Thai restaurant, many come just for the slightly pricy but very generous sushi specialties. Most makis are cooked, but for raw-fish fans the tempura-flake-topped crunchy tuna/avocado roll with spicy mayo, and tuna both inside and out, is a people-pleaser. Don't neglect Thai specialties, though, especially red and green curries customizable as to heat (mild, medium, hot, and authentic "Thai hot"). And for a bargain light lunch, try tonjiru, miso soup jazzed up with veggies and pork. \$\$\$

La Estancia Argentina 17870 Biscayne Blvd., 305-932-6477

At this market/restaurant, there's a small but quality selection of Argentine grocery staples and wines, plus a butcher counter where backyard BBQers can find everything necessary for a Parrillada party. Alternatively, grab a table and let La Estancia do the cooking – anything from tapas and elegant miga mini-taco sandwiches to hefty grilled Parrillada plates. Most irresistible, though, are the savory and sweet baked goods, especially elaborately frosted layer cakes and delicately crusted empanadas plumply stuffed with hand-cut flank steak, mushrooms in onion sauce, much more. \$\$\$

Luca Bella 19088 NE 29th Ave., 305-792-2222

In the space that once housed Chef Allen's, this trattoria offers a crowd-pleasing combination: décor with white-tablecloth elegance, yet the family-friendly feel of a classic checkered-tablecloth eatery – and Italian-American comfort food to match. Highlights: Mickey's Meatballs (named for owner Mickey Maitese), a meal-size marinara-sauced starter featuring whipped ricotta and creamy mascarpone; veal Bella Luca, mixing modern and traditional influences via a hefty breadcrumb-coated pan-fried chop with a topping of bracing balsamic reduction-dressed mesclun. \$\$\$

Mo's Bagels & Deli 2780 NE 187th St., 305-936-8555

While the term "old school" is used a lot to describe this spacious (160-seat) establishment, it actually opened in 1995. It just so evokes the classic NY delis we left behind that it seems to have been here forever. Example: Lox and nova aren't pallid, prepackaged fish, but custom-sliced from whole slabs. And bagels are hand-rolled, chewy champions, not those machine-made puffy poseurs. As complimentary pastry bites suggest, and the massive size of the succulent, sufficiently fatty pastrami sandwiches confirm, generous Jewish Mo(m) spirit shines here. \$\$

Mr. Chef's Fine Chinese Cuisine & Bar 18800 NE 29th Ave. #10, 786-787-9030

Considering our county's dearth of authentic Chinese food, this stylish eatery is heaven-sent for Aventura residents. Owners Jin Xiang Chen and Shu Ming (a.k.a. Mr. Chef) come from China's southern seacoast province of Guangdong (Canton). But you'll find no glopiously sauced, Americanized-Cantonese chop sueys here. Cooking is properly light-handed, and seafood specialties

shine (try the spicy/crispy salt and pepper shrimp). For adventurers, there's a cold jellyfish starter. Even timid taste buds can't resist tender fried shrimp balls described this way: "With crispy adorable fringy outfit." \$\$-\$\$\$

Pilar 20475 Biscayne Blvd. 305-937-2777

Chef/owner Scott Fredel previously worked for Norman Van Aken and Mark Militello. He has been executive chef at Rumi, and cooked at NYC's James Beard House. Armed with those impressive credentials, Fredel and his wife launched Pilar (named for Hemingway's boat) aiming to prove that top restaurants can be affordable. Consider it proven. Floribbean-style seafood is the specialty: fresh hearts of palm slaw and Caribbean curry sauce, rock shrimp spring rolls with sweet soy glaze, yellowtail snapper with tomato-herb vinaigrette. Forget its strip-mall location. The restaurant itself is elegant. \$\$\$

Pizza Roma 19090 NE 29th Ave. 305-937-4884

Despite its name, this homey hidden eatery serves not Rome's wood-cooked, crunchy-crust pizzas but New York-style pies with medium-thick crusts pliable enough to fold in half for neat street eating. Unlike chains, though, this indie is accommodating, so if you want your crust thin and crisp, just ask. Also featured are Italian-American entrées like baked manicotti (that's "mani-goat", for those not from NJ) big enough to share, and sub sandwiches, here called "bullets," to put you in a Sopranos frame of mind. \$\$

Sushi Siam 19575 Biscayne Blvd. 305-932-8955

(See Miami / Upper Eastside listing)

SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Alba 17315 Collins Ave., 786-923-9305

From bad-boy celeb chef Ralph Pagano, Sole resort's seaside Italian/Italian-American eatery has an irreverent retro Rat Pack vibe and a menu featuring "naked ravioli" from the Gnudi Bar, fresh seafood, homemade pastas, classic and contemporary pizzas, and old school "red sauce joint" entrées, some upscaled. (When lobster Française is available, why settle for chicken?) Almond-sage butter-sauced butternut squash gnudi is a best bet. And meals end with another best bet: the "Vinny D Split," a game enabling tables to win their meals for free. \$\$\$

Chef Philip Ho 16850 Collins Ave., 305-974-0338

Deep-pocketed diners who ate at the Setai when Jonathan Wright was executive chef already know chef Ho's work. His dazzling dim sum were the menu's highlight. Now they're affordable for all. Dumplings (chive and shrimp, green tea duck, truffle-spiked scallop, more) have skins delicate enough to see through; open shrimp dumplings with dried scallops are almost flower-like in appearance; steamed cheung fan (rice noodle crêpes) rolled around Chinese crullers are simply sinful, as are flaky-crust egg custard tarts. And the regular menu measures up to the small plates. \$\$\$

Copper Chimney 18090 Collins Ave., 305-974-0075

At this family-owned (and kid-friendly), white-tablecloth Indian restaurant, prices are more upscale than average, but so is the food's elegant presentation – plus features like a full bar, live Bollywood/belly dancing on weekends, and, among familiar North Indian fare, dishes blending contemporary touches with traditional tastes. Especially enjoyable: starters inspired by street snacks, like bikaneri chaat (fried gram flour crisps, chickpeas, and yogurt) served with two chutneys; anything featuring paneer cheese, from classic spinach/cheese palak paneer to creative khazaz-e-lazzat (sundried tomato-stuffed paneer/potato dumplings in smooth cream sauce). \$\$\$

Epicure Gourmet Market & Café 17190 Collins Ave., 305-947-4581

Who even knew that the late Rascal House had an ocean view? Diners may have to stand up to glimpse water over the dunes from the panoramic café windows of the gourmet market that replaced the Rascal, but you know you're on a tropical beach, not Brighton Beach. The big, bright café's menu, more global diner than Jewish deli, includes daily specials ranging from spa-grilled chicken to homemade Italian sausage and peppers. But it's worth seeking out items that made South Beach's original Epicure famous: sandwiches featuring housemade rare roast beef; shrimp or chunky smoked whitefish salads; fresh baked goods. \$\$\$

The H Restaurant 17608 Collins Ave., 305-931-9106

This friendly, family-owned bistro is the sort of homeaway-from-home found every few blocks in France – here Gerard and Karin Herrison, plus chef son Julien, formerly had a restaurant – but they're rarely found in South Florida. Burgers, et al., are available, but with garlicky escargots, a savory/sweet-dressed salad of duck confit atop frisée, pan-seared foie gras with port/raspberry sauce, fish with an impeccable lemon beurre blanc, and a satisfying steak/frites (with peppery cognac cream sauce). We'd leave the American stuff to the kids. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Il Mulino New York 17875 Collins Ave., 305-466-9191

If too much is not enough for you, this majorly upscale Italian-American place, an offshoot of the famed NYC original, is your restaurant. For starters, diners receive enough freebie food – fried zucchini coins, salami, bruschetta with varying toppings, a wedge of quality parmigiano, garlic bread – that ordering off the menu seems superfluous. But mushroom raviolis in truffle cream sauce are irresistible, and perfectly tenderized veal parmesan, the size of a large pizza, makes a great take-out dinner...for the next week. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Kitchen 305 16701 Collins Ave., 305-749-2110

Offering eclectic American fare, this resort restaurant room, despite its contemporary open kitchen, has the retro-glam look of a renovated discotheque – which is what it was. In fact, it's still as much lounge as eatery, so it's best to arrive early if you want a relatively DJ-free eating experience. A seductive mango-papaya BBQ sauce makes ribs a tasty choice any night, but most local diners in the know come on nights when the restaurant features irresistibly priced seasonal seafood specials (all-you-can-eat stone crabs one night, lobster on another). A spacious dining counter overlooking the cooks makes the Kitchen a comfortable spot for singles. \$\$\$

Piazzetta 17875 Collins Ave., 305-918-6816

You can't help feeling optimistic about a tourist town's food scene when its resort restaurants, which generally walk the middle of the road, get creative. And it doesn't get much more creative than this stylish restaurant and Italian market, which bills itself as a trip to an Italian-inspired "little market square," but which, along with artisanal salumi plus pizzas and pastas, serves sushi. Particularly tasty: the native Neapolitan pizza chef's truffled tagliatelle and mushroom pies; meltingly tender braised short ribs; an impeccable market-driven meat and cheese platter. \$\$\$

St. Petersburg Deli 17080 Collins Ave., 305-947-9696

Don't expect fancified stuff like menus, or the English language, at this informal market/café. If there's signage identifying the prepared foods behind the counters, it's in Russian, and daily dishes are pretty much what the cooks feel like making. So look and point. We'd suggest pointing at cold yogurt-based soups like tangy okroshka (with cukes, egg, scallions, potatoes, and dill) or holodnik (similar, with beets added); eggplant roulades, stuffed with spiced shredded carrots, are also a refreshing summer dish. Hot choices include meatballs in rich cream sauce and chicken Kiev. \$\$\$

Timo 17624 Collins Ave., 305-936-1008

Since opening in 2003, the inventive yet clean and unfussy Italian/Mediterranean-inspired seasonal food at this hot spot, created by chef/owner Tim Andriola (at the time best known for his stints at Chef Allen's and Mark's South Beach), has been garnering local and national raves. Don't bother reading them. Andriola's dishes speak for themselves: a salad of crisp oysters atop frisée, cannelloni bean, and pancetta; foie gras crostini with a subtle caramelized orange sauce; a blue crab ravioli with toasted pignoli and brown butter; or a wood-oven three-cheese "white" pizza. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

Werner Staub's Peppermill 350 Bayview Dr., 305-466-2016

It'll likely be years until diners stop instinctively heading for the tropic-alpine chalet that formerly housed the Peppermill at the Waterways in Aventura. But this new indoor/outdoor space's bay views are much more spectacular. And the food is the same unique old-school stuff. Seafood is featured, and while there are contemporary preparations, you can't resist hard-to-find retro dishes like imported Dover sole almondine, Swiss-style poached trout with champagne-shallot sauce, an elaborate steak tartar, and for dessert, peach Melba or strawberries Romanoff. \$\$\$

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For Sale | \$600,000

6,000 SF development site zoned mixed use. The industrial feel of the neighborhood is a magnet for the artist community. The location combined with favorable zoning make this area a great development play.

MIKA MATTINGLY | 786.486.4391
mmattingly@metro1cre.com



WYNWOOD: 2900 NW 1 AVE
FOR LEASE \$17 PSF GROSS | FOR SALE \$6,300,000

29,800 SF building which can accommodate a variety of uses such as private collection, creative office, showroom, gallery, studio, retail or a variety of mixed uses. Adjacent to the Rubell Collection.

TONY CHO | 305.571.9991
info@metro1cre.com



LITTLE RIVER: 240 NE 62 ST & 253 NE 61 ST
FOR LEASE | \$4,800 / MONTH EACH

2 warehouses available for lease ranging from 3,300-3,400 SF. Brand new construction. Excellent location minutes away from Downtown Miami, Design District and Miami Beach.

IRENE DAKOTA | 305 972 8860
idakota@metro1properties.com



LITTLE RIVER: 244 NE 62 ST
FOR SALE | \$1,375,000

Brand new 7,600 SF warehouse located in Little River. Great for owner/user and investor. Unit feature: gated parking, 24' ceilings and drive-in wide bay doors.

IRENE DAKOTA | 305 972 8860
idakota@metro1properties.com

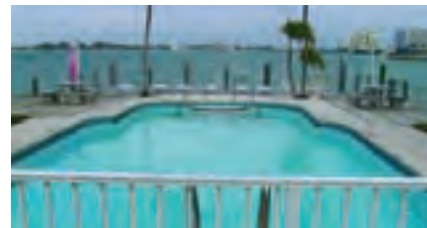
RESIDENTIAL SHOWCASE



MIAMI SHORES: 1200 NE 103 ST
FOR SALE \$975,000

4 BD / 4 BA beautiful mid-century modern open floor plan home. House has been completely updated. Pool is finished with Pebbletec. Beautiful gardens, huge open rooms, terrazzo floors and impact windows.

IRENE DAKOTA | 305 972 8860
idakota@metro1properties.com



N. BAY VILLAGE: WATERFRONT CONDO
FOR SALE \$175,000 OR FOR RENT \$1600/MO

1,136 SF 2 BD/ 2BA with large balcony at The Lido Condo. Spectacular direct-east wide bay views from all rooms, closets galore. 2nd floor corner unit of 2-story 1950's bldg w/pool. Convenient to beach & city.

MARCY KAPLAN & LORI BRANDT | 786.543.5755
gimmeshelter@metro1properties.com



ADORABLE HOME IN ENCHANTED FOREST
FOR SALE \$219,000

Cozy 2 BD / 1 BA home on 11,000 SF lot nestled in N. Miami's famed street of holiday lights. Mature oak trees canopy entire street. Terrazzo floors, updated kitchen and bath. Fully fenced backyard. Rarely available!

MARCY KAPLAN & LORI BRANDT | 786.543.5755
gimmeshelter@metro1properties.com



MIDTOWN 4: 3301 NE 1 AVE, #1407
FOR SALE \$421,264

Impeccable 2 BD/ 2 BA in Midtown 4 featuring marble flooring and Italian kitchen with stainless steel appliances. Nice size balcony with beautiful sunset views.

FLAVIA TALLO | 305 978 5463
ftallo@metro1properties.com

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