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MIAMI

SPRING 2015



50+

WAYS TO
EXPERIENCE MIAMI

EXPERTS PICK THE TOP PLACES
TO DINE, SHOP AND EXPLORE

CULINARY PROWESS
5 FEMALE CHEFS AT THE
HELM OF FAMED EATERIES

DECO DISTRICT
A LOOK AT 1930S MIAMI

COLORFUL CULTURE
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Welcome to Miami

My name is Ralph Chaoul, and I am one of the VIP Concierges/W Insiders at W South Beach. I studied hotel management at César Ritz College in Switzerland and started working in Miami Beach 10 years ago. My main responsibility at W South Beach is to take care of all the requests that come from our high-end guests. These requests include, but are not limited to, room reservations, restaurants, clubs and all of the Miami-centric activities that our guests would like to experience during their stay with us.

The highlight of my position is that I have great opportunities to meet guests from around the world and take care of their needs. I would describe Miami as an international city because it attracts visitors from all over due to the tropical weather, gorgeous beaches and great scenery. Miami has plenty to offer from restaurants, art galleries, nightlife, shopping and a lot more. A large number of popular events take place here, like Art Basel in December and the South Beach Wine & Food Festival in February.

This season, go off the beaten path and into a neighborhood like Little Havana (page 30), where visitors will be immersed in Cuban culture from the family-owned restaurants to the time-honored landmarks. Or for a look at Miami circa 1920, there's the Art Deco District (page 36). Here, the streets are lined with intricately designed buildings with neon facades beckoning passersby inside.

Wherever you choose to explore, find recommendations throughout the magazine from myself and fellow Miami concierges. We have selected the best places that are distinctly Miami for you to make the most of your stay in this bustling, coastal city.



MICHAEL RAVENEY

*Sincerely,
Ralph Chaoul
W Insider
W South Beach*



Concierge Partners

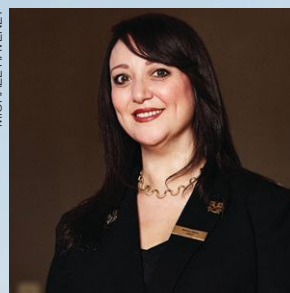
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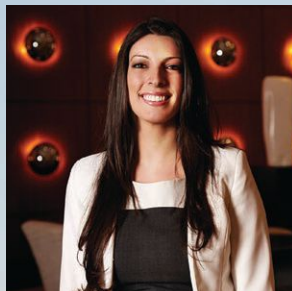
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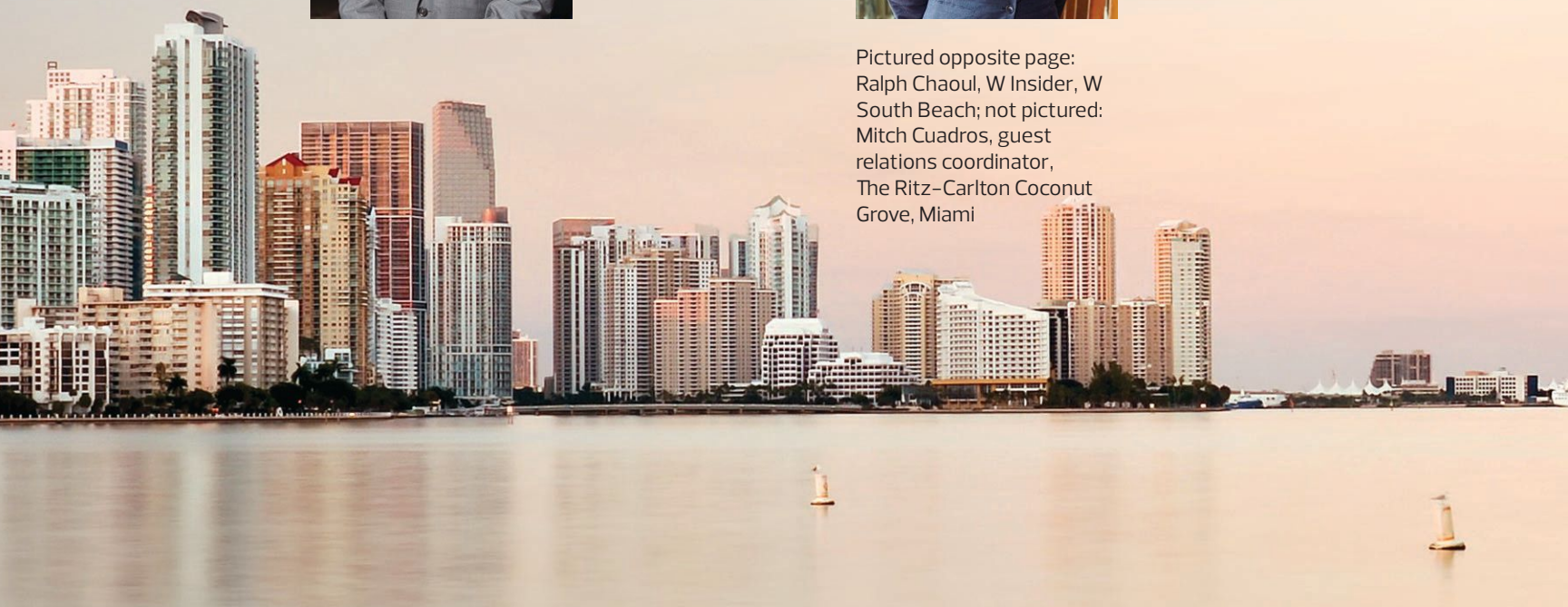
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Pictured opposite page:
Ralph Chaoul, W Insider, W
South Beach; not pictured:
Mitch Cuadros, guest
relations coordinator,
The Ritz-Carlton Coconut
Grove, Miami



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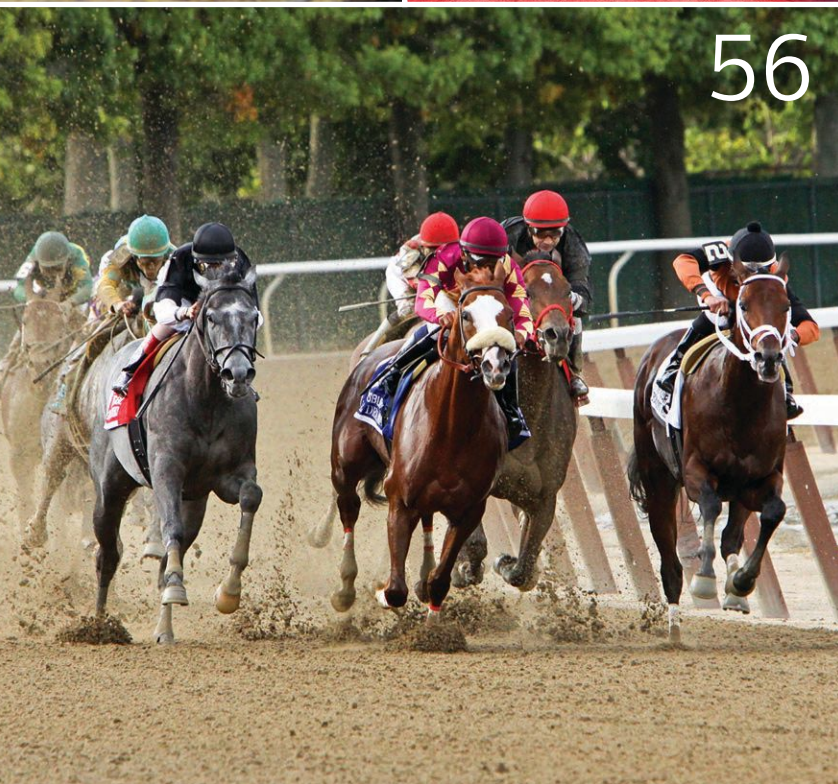
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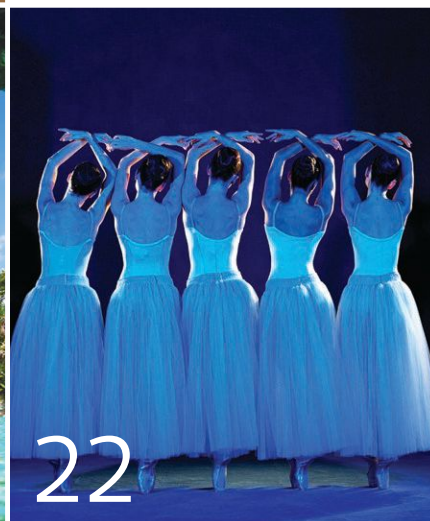
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Correction: In the spring issue of Bespoke Concierge Magazine, Heath Porter was incorrectly identified as a master sommelier. Porter is an advanced sommelier at Uvaggio.

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“One Way: Peter Marino”

THROUGH MAY 3; BASS MUSEUM OF ART

This exhibit, curated by Jérôme Sans, examines the connection between architect and designer Peter Marino’s iconic structures and his personal stores of contemporary art, pop art, bronzes and sculptures. It includes commissioned new work from artists Gregor Hildebrandt, Guy Limone and others. (305-673-7530; bassmuseum.org)

Miami Dance Festival

THROUGH MAY 24; VENUES THROUGHOUT THE CITY

The 2015 festival will bring a diverse lineup of dance performances to Miami, from modern to traditional styles. (305-858-7002; momentumdance.com)

Iman Issa

THROUGH OCT. 4; PÉREZ ART MUSEUM MIAMI

Cairo-born artist Iman Issa offers an exhibition of new multimedia works drawn from a larger series titled “Heritage Studies.” The sculptures, accompanied by interpretive texts, offer a reinterpretation of objects to connect the past to the present. (305-375-3000; pamm.org)

“Sister Act”

APRIL 14-19; ZIFF BALLET OPERA HOUSE

The musical smash hit is packed with laughter and original songs scored by Oscar winner Alan Menken. A diva’s life is turned



COURTESY OF XU BING STUDIO

“Xu Bing: Writing Between Heaven and Earth”

THROUGH MAY 24; THE PATRICIA & PHILLIP FROST ART MUSEUM

Works from Xu Bing are on display in this solo exhibition of shu art. The masterpieces illustrate the art of writing as an image, challenging preconceptions about language and cultural identity. (305-348-2890; thefrost.fiu.edu)

upside down when she’s sent to a convent as part of a witness protection program, helping her new conservative sisters find their voices along the way. (305-949-6722; arshcenter.org)

Jazz Legends

APRIL 24; KNIGHT CONCERT HALL

In honor of Jazz Appreciation Month, vocalist Al Jarreau and alto saxophonist David Sanborn—each a winner of multiple Grammy Awards—team up for this soulful

concert that will cap the season’s Jazz Roots series. (305-949-6722; arshcenter.org)

New World Symphony Season Finale

APRIL 25-26; NEW WORLD CENTER, MIAMI BEACH

Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas collaborates with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter in this final performance of the 2014-15 season. The classical program begins with Franz Schubert’s “Rosamunde,” followed by

a violin concerto by Alban Berg, the U.S. premiere of “En rêve” by Norbert Moret, and “La Mer” by Claude Debussy. (305-673-3331; nws.edu)

“History & Ourselves”

MAY 1-NOV. 3; HISTORYMIAMI

Using pieces pulled from the museum’s archives, HistoryMiami presents an interactive retrospective of the city. Each artifact is related to the themes of “arrive, adapt, grow and live.” A few highlights include floor panels with the Miami Heat



O, Miami Poetry Festival

THROUGH APRIL 30; VENUES THROUGHOUT THE CITY

In honor of National Poetry Month, this festival kicked off April 1 with a poetic boat cruise and concludes April 30 after Piano Slam 7, a teen poetry and music competition. The monthlong festival aims to reach all residents of Miami-Dade County by hosting events at locations all over the city, such as Vizcaya Museum & Gardens and The Betsy South Beach. Some of the highlights include My Soul's Shadow on April 25 and Miami Zine Fair on April 26. (omiami.org)

logo from the old Miami Arena (demolished in 2008), William Brickell's tombstone and an early Coral Gables street light. (305-375-1942; historymiami.org)

The Steinway & Sons Piano Extravaganza

MAY 3; KNIGHT CONCERT HALL

The Miami Symphony Orchestra closes its "Grand Season of the Piano" with an emphatic performance of concertos, a world premiere for two pianists and an updated version of an original arrangement by Franz Liszt titled "Hexameron." (305-275-5666; themiso.org)

Ryan Adams

MAY 7; THE FILLMORE
MIAMI BEACH AT JACKIE
GLEASON THEATER

The historic theater, now home to an eclectic sampling of artists,

presents prolific solo artist Ryan Adams in concert this spring. The multiple Grammy Award nominee partners with singer-songwriter Jenny Lewis for a musical evening fueled by indie rock and alternative country hits. (305-673-7300; fillmoremb.com)

Miami Fashion Week

MAY 27-30; MIAMI BEACH
CONVENTION CENTER

A departure from the major sartorial showcases that take place in the fall and winter seasons, this four-day fashion extravaganza focuses on resort wear created by designers from around the world. A variety of colorful runway shows combined with pop-up boutiques and lively parties provide attendees with plenty of entertainment, all presented in the Miami spirit. (miamifashionweek.com) **C**



"The Magnificents"

THROUGH MAY 3; CARNIVAL STUDIO THEATER

The regional premiere of this original production by Dennis Watkins introduces audiences to a family practicing the art of magical entertainment. The aging star teaches a young boy the tricks of the trade, complete with aerial circus arts, film and magic. (305-949-6722; arshcenter.org)

[RADAR]

Hot Spots

Concierges at top hotels recommend the latest shopping, dining and art destinations to open in Miami.

COMPILED BY SHARON STELLO

"There's this place called **BODEGA [TAQUERIA Y TEQUILA]**. It's a taco stand outside, but when you walk in and head toward the restroom, there's something that looks like a Porta-Potty built into the wall. Once you open the door, there's no restroom; it opens up to this speakeasy-type bar. It doesn't look like there's anything in there—you can't even hear music. And, of course, the tacos are delicious." (bodegasouthbeach.com)

—**Mitch Cuadros**, guest relations coordinator at **The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami**

"**BRICK HOUSE MIAMI** opened back in ... [May] 2014 and is considered one of the newer and fresher watering holes in the different yet popular Wynwood area. ... It is a beer garden and gastropub fused together. With disc jockeys playing old school music from the 1980s and 1990s to music of today's age, it sure has something to offer all types of guests. It has a clever late-night grub menu, from Angus sliders to vegetarian tacos and rosemary fries." (305-456-2629)

—**Felipe Iero**, concierge at **The Ritz-Carlton Bal Harbour, Miami**

"The one popular theater performance that I would recommend my guests not miss this upcoming spring season would be ... [at] **MICRO THEATER [MIAMI]**." Check the theater's website for updates on the latest plays; each is short, running approximately 15 minutes, and costs \$5. Choose one or watch several productions, which take place inside air-conditioned shipping containers that are decorated with bright graffiti and seat about 15 people. (microtheatermiami.com)

—**Mariana Malek**, chief concierge at **Trump International Beach Resort**

"The Design District is the new luxury shopping and hot-test destination in Miami [that] I will highly recommend to any guest who is looking for cutting-edge fashion, art, design and culture." **LANVIN** opened a temporary shop in the district in late 2014 and plans to move into a permanent building this spring. Here, shoppers can find a selection of ready-to-wear apparel and accessories for men and women. (lanvin.com) — **Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at **The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables**

"An art gallery that is definitely worth visiting is the **DIANA LOWENSTEIN GALLERY** located in Midtown. We are very fortunate to have some beautiful pieces displayed in The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach. ... But in order to get a true eye-opening experience, it is necessary to go to the gallery and explore the incredible works firsthand." Upcoming exhibits include Ivelisse Jimenez and Julie Sass from April 10 to May 31, followed by Alejandra Padilla and Chu Teppa from June 12 to July 31. (dianalowensteingallery.com)

—**Melany Ramsay**, concierge at **The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach**



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Vagabond Hotel,
nee motel

Neighborhood at a Glance

Biscayne Boulevard from 50th to 77th streets, a stretch of road steeped in the tradition of Miami modernism, is receiving a facelift that pays homage to its past.

BY ALLISON HATA

The Miami Modern—MiMo, for short—Historic District is a hidden gem along one of the city's most well-traveled roads. By the 1950s, this charming Biscayne Boulevard enclave was defined by the flamboyant, resort-like architectural style associated with South Florida. From around 50th to 77th streets, family-friendly motels and businesses gave the area its colorful character, beckoning motorists to stop and explore as they drove through Miami.

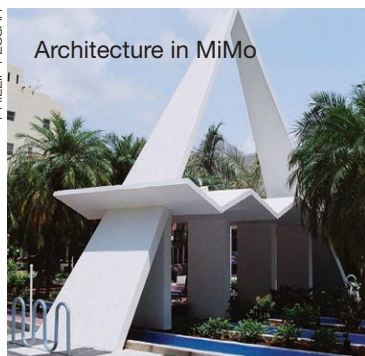
The northeast neighborhood fell victim to urban decay in the late 1900s but, like so many neighborhoods in the city, the MiMo Historic District is making a comeback. Today, the corridor is being transformed with boutique hotels, shops, restaurants and renovated storefronts. A

midrise residential tower is planned for Northeast 57th Street with ground floor retail and, last summer, the iconic Vagabond Hotel was meticulously restored with a nod to the kitschy glamour of midcentury Miami. Celebrity chef Michelle Bernstein even opened her flagship Michy's restaurant off of 69th Street in 2006; it's since closed to make way for a new dining concept—further evidence of MiMo's present state of constant evolution.

There's an electric buzz that now surrounds the historic district. And, with a legion of locals committed to raising the profile of MiMo, the neighborhood's vintage boutiques and trendy bistros promise an authentically Miami experience.

1. "I highly [recommend] a **WALKING TOUR** from the MiMo District; ... the expert person is Mr. John Bachay, who is a member ... [of] the MiMo Biscayne Association. He offers a walking tour by appointment and requires a minimum of six guests. You can contact him at jbachay@aol.com and the fee is \$25 per guest." —**Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables

PHILLIP PESSAR



Architecture in MiMo

2. "**BIKRAM YOGA CENTRAL MIAMI** is the [neighborhood's] top-notch yoga studio with great classes and instructors. They offer an amazing juice and smoothie bar in the lobby, [and] also have a steam room [and] massage room. The studio is immaculately clean and easy to navigate. The single class costs \$25, but the fee covers the class, a mat and towel." (5084 Biscayne Blvd, Ste. 101; 305-231-3171; bikramyogacm.com) —**Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables



Bikram Yoga Central Miami

3. American classics get a trendy upgrade at **THE FEDERAL FOOD, DRINK & PROVISIONS**. Small plates like buttermilk biscuits with honey

apple cider glaze and barbecued deviled eggs grace the tops of wooden picnic bench-style tables, along with heartier dishes like beef osso bucco and spicy clams from Florida. (5132 Biscayne Blvd; 305-758-9559; thefederalmiami.com) —**Ralph Chaoul**, W insider at W South Beach

4. "If you wish to have a divine pizza in a casual ambience, then go to **ANDIAMO BRICK OVEN PIZZA**. ... Andiamo carries a nice selection of craft beers, microbrews, import beers and domestic beers. The staff is



Andiamo Brick Oven Pizza

6. "At **FLAVORISH MARKET** ... you will be delighted by homemade soups and empanadas for a light and casual lunch. While in there, you will be



friendly and the atmosphere is pleasant. The pizzas are excellent with a perfect ratio of sauce to cheese." (5600 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-762-5751; andiamopizzamiami.com) —**Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables

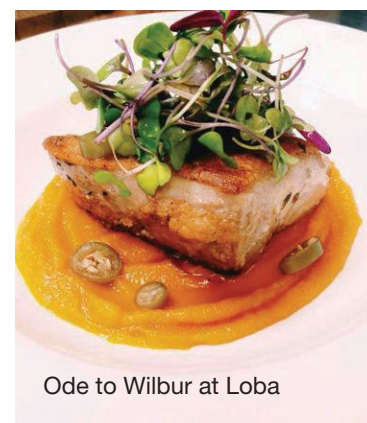
5. "You can lose yourself adventuring at **FLY BOUTIQUE**, where the fun never ends. Here you [will] find charming vintage clothing, jewelry, purses and pretty much everything you can think of. ... Give yourself time to find that one-of-a-kind piece." (7235 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-604-8508; flyboutiquevintage.com) —**Paola Peschiera**, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami

tempted to take home some organic chocolate, granola, wine, cheese or ... artisan beers to relax after shopping." (7283 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-754-8787; flavorishmarket.com) —**Paola Peschiera**, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami

7. "**NI. DO. CAFFÉ** is a small restaurant tucked away in MiMo—absolutely charming. If you go for dinner, do yourself a favor and get something, anything, with mozzarella. Ni. Do. has their own mozzarella bar so you are sure to get exactly the cheese you are in the mood for." (7295 Biscayne Blvd.; 306-960-7022; nidocaffe.com) —**Melany Ramsay**, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach

8. "**VAGABOND RESTAURANT**, located at the Vagabond Hotel in the Upper East Side of Biscayne Boulevard, is where 25-year-old chef Alex Chang has brought casual fine dining to Miami. Chef Chang wanted to create a menu that defined Miami." The innovative American menu, influenced by Latin, Asian and European cultures, includes signature options such as seasoned grasshoppers. (7301 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-400-8420; thevagabondhotel.com) —**Vicky Reyes**, chief concierge at SLS South Beach

9. "**LOBA**, a cozy Latin American restaurant, has dishes that put a modern twist on some classics. ... Try anything from the pan-seared salmon to the Loba burger, and get a quick peek at the quirky names on the menu like the Ode to Wilbur, ... seared pork belly, or the Vincent van Goat, [a] honey goat cheese appetizer." (7420 Biscayne Blvd; 786-536-6692; lobarestaurant.com) —**Melany Ramsay**, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach



Ode to Wilbur at Loba

10. Paintings decorate the walls of **MIMO ART CAFE**, which is open Tuesday through Sunday. "Mimo Art Cafe specializes in untraditional croissants. ... A must-have would be the pantescia croissant, topped with sauteed red onions, green and Kalamata olives, fresh diced tomatoes, prosciutto di Parma and melted mozzarella." (592 N.E. 77th St.; 305-765-7733) —**Mariana Malek**, chef concierge at Trump International Beach Resort C

Award-Winning Appeal

The James Beard Foundation is recognizing Miami restaurants and chefs, marking the city's repute as a growing culinary capital.

BY SHARON STELLO



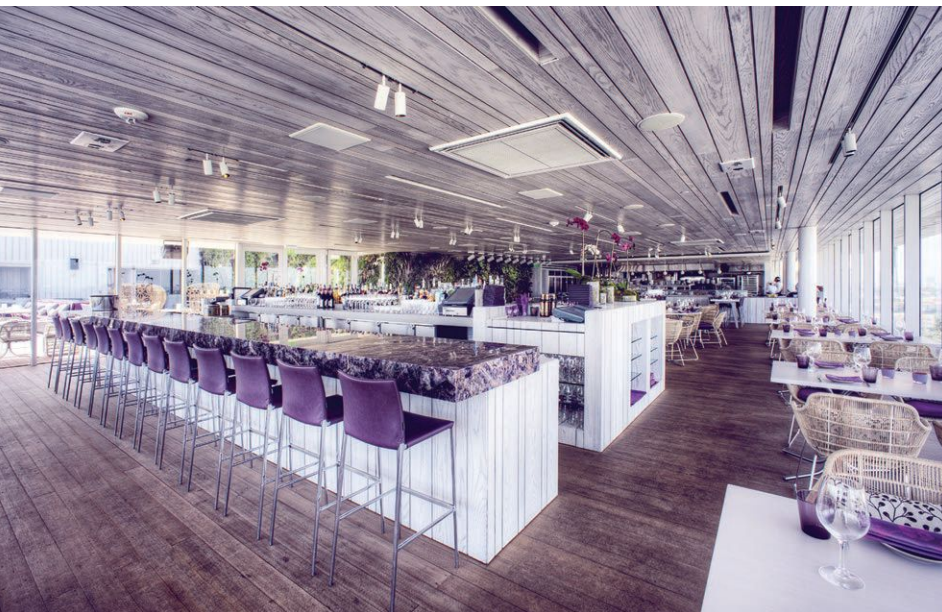
MICHAEL PISARRI

Seagrape restaurant in
Miami Beach

One benchmark to help visitors select the next Miami restaurant they'll enjoy is the James Beard Award. Presented by the New York-based James Beard Foundation since 1991, the awards are the highest honor for America's food and beverage professionals, from chefs and cookbook authors to journalists and designers. Selecting one of these esteemed establishments for breakfast, lunch or dinner is a sure way to enjoy a meal of unrivaled cuisine. In Miami, award winners include landmarks like Joe's Stone Crab and Versailles Restaurant as well as newer spots

such as Juvia, which won in the design category in 2013—architect Alejandro Barrios-Carrero designed the terrace with a retractable roof and a living wall of lush greenery. And chefs who have received James Beard commendations for their culinary work outside Miami are setting up shop in local kitchens.

The following eateries with James Beard recognition also have earned approval from concierges at Miami's top hotels, who recommend these places to guests on a daily basis.



“**JUVIA** restaurant was recognized by the James Beard Foundation and received the Outstanding Restaurant Design award for spaces with 76 seats and over. It is a stunning combination of architecture, landscape and design along with its exquisite international fusion cuisine.” Sunset is the perfect time to take in views of Biscayne Bay with a cocktail in hand, like the Juvia Lemonade or Purple Rain. (1111 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach; 305-763-8272; juviamiami.com) —**Mariana Malek**, chef concierge at Trump International Beach Resort



JUAN FERNANDO AYOBA/PUBBELLY MEDIA GROUP

“At **PUBBELLY**, ... three-time James Beard Award [semifinalist] chef Jose Mendin delivers divine shareable small plates, now a staple of Pubbelly restaurants. Their culinary style and inspiration is from Asian and Latin ingredients with European cooking techniques. I love their neighborhood feel, mouth-watering food, fair prices and friendly service. The restaurant is nice [and] casual ... with a small wooden bar and high-top communal tables.” (1418 20th St., Miami Beach; 305-532-7555; pubbellyboys.com) —**Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables



“**KHONG RIVER HOUSE** is delicious. It’s a mix of Asian cuisine like Vietnamese and Thai. I love to send guests there. It’s a lot of fun and a really cool atmosphere. The food is delicious and the staff is very helpful.” Khong River House was a semifinalist for a James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant in 2013. Dishes here are meant to be shared, such as the curries and noodle dishes, dumplings, crispy duck and banana leaf-wrapped trout. Antique birdcages and dimly lit bulbs hang from high ceilings while reclaimed wood creates a rustic feel. The ambience combined with the cuisine’s authentic flavors transports diners to Southeast Asia. (1661 Meridian Ave., Miami Beach; 305-763-8147; khongriver.com) —**Mitch Cuadros**, guest relations coordinator at The Ritz-Carlton Coconut Grove, Miami

SKOTT SNIDER



“**THE BAZAAR BY JOSÉ ANDRÉS** [at SLS South Beach] offers tapas-style dishes with a Caribbean and Latin twist. Its vibrant location offers the best of both worlds: fine dining and nightlife. With a great team of mixologists, its cocktail list is not far behind. The dining rooms were designed by Philippe Starck and give it the look that it needs to accompany the cuisine.” Andrés won a James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef in 2011 for his restaurant, Minibar by José Andrés, in Washington, D.C. (1701 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 305-455-2999; sbe.com) —**Vicky Reyes**, chief concierge at SLS South Beach



“Heading over to Miami Beach, there is a sanctuary garden where two famous mixologists ... decided to open a pop-up bar at the renovated former Indian Creek Hotel, what is now the inventive Freehand Miami hostel. Locals made the bar so popular they decided to stay open for the public. What makes **THE BROKEN SHAKER** special, besides the outdoor area that invites people to relax with such a great ambience, is their handcrafted cocktails that are boosted with spices and herbs from their garden.” The Broken Shaker was a James Beard Award semifinalist for Outstanding Bar Program in 2013 and 2014. (2727 Indian Creek Dr., Miami Beach; 305-531-2727; brokenshaker.com) —Paola Peschiera, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami



Michael Schwartz—who received the James Beard Award for Best Chef: South in 2010 and was a semifinalist for Outstanding Chef in 2014—opened his flagship restaurant, **MICHAEL'S GENUINE FOOD & DRINK**, in Miami's Design District in 2007. The relaxed neighborhood bistro earns rave reviews from locals and visitors alike for its menu, which changes daily and is based on local, seasonal ingredients. The eatery is also revered for its Sunday brunch with dishes like breakfast pizza and lemon ricotta pancakes. (130 N.E. 40th St.; 305-573-5550; michaelsgenuine.com) —Ralph Chaoul, W insider at W South Beach



“Our beloved and former chef, Michelle Bernstein (2008 Best Chef: South winner), opened Michy's with her husband and partner David Martinez in 2006, just after she left Mandarin Oriental's signature restaurant Azul. Being a Miami native, her secret to such a successful restaurant was her soul food cooking, simplicity and fresh ingredients. After eight years, Michy's is now under beautification of the location and ... excited to offer a new concept to the menu. In the meantime, if you want to keep savoring her amazing cuisine, then try her new restaurant at the Thompson Miami Beach hotel, **SEAGRAPE**, or have a casual breakfast or lunch at **CRUMB ON PARCHMENT** in the Design District.” (Seagrape: 4041 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 786-605-4043; seagrapemiamibeach.com) (Crumb on Parchment: 3930 N.E. Second Ave.; 305-572-9444) —Paola Peschiera, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami



“One of Miami’s most beautiful qualities is its tie to Cuban heritage. Though there are many new and fabulous Latin restaurants to choose from, it’s important to know and respect the classics. **VERSAILLES [RESTAURANT]** (which won the America’s Classics award in 2001) has been serving their amazing picadillo, ropa vieja and vaca frita since 1971 and is still going strong. Go enjoy a classic Cuban dish and, when you are done, go outside to “la ventanita,” or the window, and order a cafe Cubano (Cuban coffee). Drink your coffee, look around and you’ll probably overhear some Cuban buddies exchanging conversation in Spanish, and you might feel, even just for a moment, that you have taken a trip to an island not so far away. Now that is a Miami experience.” (3555 S.W. Eighth St.; 305-444-0240; versaillesrestaurant.com) —Melany Ramsay, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach



“Whenever a guest of ours is in Miami for just one night, or a short trip, and they ask if there’s a place they have to go before they leave, one of our most popular responses is, ‘Go to Joe’s.’ **JOE’S STONE CRAB** (which won the America’s Classics award in 1998) is famous for ... their stone crabs. ... We suggest going early, or going with someone you don’t mind waiting with. Since they don’t take reservations, it’s likely you might wait a while to be seated. Order the stone crabs, and maybe some lobster macaroni and cheese or bacon Brussels sprouts, and please leave room for their famous Key lime pie at the end.” (11 Washington Ave., Miami Beach; 305-673-0365; joesstonecrab.com) —Melany Ramsay, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach



THE DUTCH, a restaurant, bar and oyster room at the W South Beach hotel is a collaboration of New York restaurateurs Andrew Carmellini (a two-time James Beard Award winner), Josh Pickard and Luke Ostrom, as well as locals Karim Masri and Nicola Siervo. With a focus on American food, The Dutch serves dishes from steak, seafood and free-range chicken to farm fresh salads and homemade pies. A white brick interior provides a relaxed ambience, while outdoor seating is also available to enjoy Miami’s balmy weather. (2201 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 305-938-3111; thedutchmiami.com) —Ralph Chaoul, W insider at W South Beach C

For All Time

Watch styles from classic to modern are waiting to be discovered in Miami's boutiques.

BY SHARON STELLO

Since the era when pocket watches were en vogue, a stunning timepiece has served as a dependable way to keep track of the hour and also a fashionable accent to any outfit. From diamond-encrusted rose gold to sporty steel, today's luxury chronometers are as individual as the wearer.

Whether purchased for yourself or as a gift to mark a special occasion—such as a graduation or milestone birthday—timepieces make a long-lasting addition to both men's and women's wardrobes and may serve as an heirloom that's handed down for generations to come. Today, watches do more than

just tick away the seconds with precision. Many are equipped with impressive features showing the different time zones, moon phases or movement of the constellations across the sky.

With top brands like Officine Panerai, Audemars Piguet and Breitling represented throughout the city, it's impossible to go wrong as quality timepieces go hand-in-hand with excellent service at bespoke shops in Miami. Here, concierges at local hotels advise which stores are their top picks to find a piece that will suit any shopper.

Panerai Radiomir 1940
Three Days Automatic Oro
Rosso watch features a
polished red gold case and
alligator skin strap, \$24,400,
at Officine Panerai.

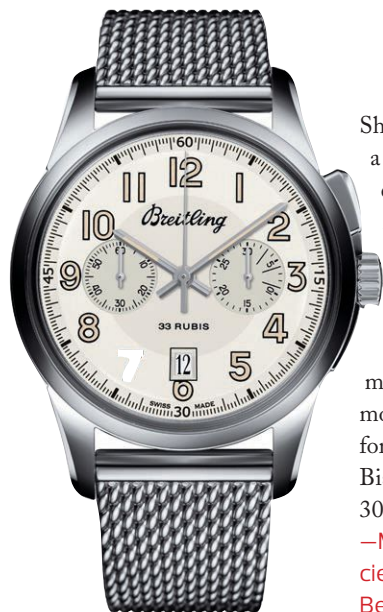


DOUG CASTANEDO

"**[OFFICINE] PANERAI** is an exclusive, high-end ... brand of watches with an amazing blend of Italian design and Swiss technology. It is a watch with history and elegance, a truly valuable timepiece only for those who can understand and appreciate it. The Panerai store is located inside the exclusive Bal Harbour Shops." (9700 Collins Ave., Ste. 225, Bal Harbour; 786-735-6446; panerai.com) —Mariana Malek, chef concierge at Trump International Beach Resort



“When I get the question of top-notch jewelry, I automatically tell my guest about **MONTICA JEWELRY**. Montica is a well-established jewelry [store located in downtown Coral Gables, featuring the best selection of watches and diamond jewelry. Montica offers collections from today’s top jewelry and watch designs along with custom design services. ... Montica stands out from other shops for their quality selection ... their exceptional service, [and commitment] to detail and perfection.” (75 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables; 305-446-2957; montica.com) —Joaquin Pastora, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables



Shoppers can find **BREITLING**, a longstanding brand with quality pieces, in the Aventura Mall. One of the last independent Swiss watch brands, this family business still develops and manufactures its own mechanical chronograph movements in its workshops for unrivaled perfection. (19501 Biscayne Blvd., Aventura; 305-935-9350; breitling.com) —Mariana Malek, chef concierge at Trump International Beach Resort

Breitling Transocean Chronograph 1915 has a steel case, white dial and steel bracelet, price upon request, at Breitling.



“**IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN** boutique is ... at the new location in the Miami Design District. This shop just opened up in the new Palm Court, which is a tourist destination in itself. This is a magnificent space for travelers and locals alike to purchase a timepiece that they will have forever.” The company, which began in 1868 by Boston watchmaker Florentine Ariosto Jones in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, continues to turn out timekeeping masterpieces. IWC also maintains a commitment to the environment by using green energy for its carbon-neutral operations. (140 N.E. 39th St., Ste. 125; 305-507-7488; iwc.com) —Ralph Chaoul, W insider at W South Beach

IWC Big Pilots' Watch Perpetual Calendar Boutique Edition Miami is a specialty timepiece created specifically for the new boutique in the Design District. Its features include a stainless steel case and yellow hands and indices, \$39,600, at IWC Schaffhausen.



“**CRM JEWELERS**, located in the heart of downtown, is a must ... to visit in Miami if you love to buy, sell and trade watches. Their exceptional staff has more than 20 years of experience in the industry. They always go out of their way to provide customers with the most value possible for their investment. The staff is always honest and transparent with the clients. The advantages, in my opinion, from other stores are exceptional value in watches and jewelry. [Find the] best luxury brands such as Rolex and Patek Philippe, [plus] industry knowledge and expertise.” (22 N.E. First St., Ste. 103; 305-349-5000; crmjewelers.com) —Joaquin Pastora, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables

“V.A.U.L.T (VALUABLE ASSETS UNIQUE LUXURY TOYS) ... offers a worldwide collection of high-end sunglasses, writing instruments as well as one-of-a-kind jewelry.” The upscale shop carries premier watch brands such as Richard Mille, Bell & Ross and Giuliano Mazzuoli, while binoculars, cameras and knives round out the selection of luxury goods. (1024 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach; 305-673-5251; vaultworldwide.com) —**Vicky Reyes, chief concierge at SLS South Beach**



“AUDEMARS PIGUET at Bal Harbour Shops is a must-see for visitors of Miami and Bal Harbour. It houses some of the most unique and beautiful watches I have ever seen.” Since Jules Louis Audemars teamed up with Edward Auguste Piguet in 1875, the watchmaking company has continued to push boundaries in this precision art form, marking several firsts such as the world’s thinnest wristwatch in 1946. Still in the hands of its founding families, the business prides itself on quality workmanship. (9700 Collins Ave., Bal Harbour; 305-864-6776; audemarspiguet.com) —**Ralph Chaoul, W insider at W South Beach**



“LEXOR MIAMI ... carries most upscale brands such as Movado, TechnoMarine, Invicta, Burberry and much more, for discount prices. They are authorized retailers for the wide variety of brands they carry, which makes them perfect for those guests who are wishing to purchase for themselves or for gifts. ... Best of all, they offer free transportation for customers as well as free delivery to the hotel or wherever the guest is staying in Miami.” (2371 N.W. 20th St.; 305-633-0950; lexormiami.com) —**Mariana Malek, chef concierge at Trump International Beach Resort**

CHOPARD is a renowned watch and jewelry brand recognized for its creative designs. “It is literally a time-honored family tradition since 1860. We are fortunate to have Chopard located just a stone’s throw away at the world-renowned Bal Harbour Shops. The general manager is Alejandro Cuellar and [he] will be more than happy to privately showcase the current, classic and upcoming collections [to shoppers].” (9700 Collins Ave., Ste. 127, Bal Harbour; 305-868-8626; chopard.com) —**Felipe Toro, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton Bal Harbour, Miami**



“Open for more than 30 years, **H & H JEWELS**—this hidden gem—keeps delighting guests with their service and gems. In the middle of Coconut Grove, one of the most attractive neighborhoods of Miami, you will be lured by the luxurious timepieces that H & H Jewels has to offer. Not only can you discover brands such as Chopard, Corum, Baume & Mercier [and] Breitling ... , but also acquire that unique custom-made jewelry that can create everlasting memories.” (3434 Main Hwy., Coconut Grove; 305-442-9760; hhjewels.com) —**Paola Peschiera, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami C**

The Breitling Transocean Chronograph Unitime watch shimmers with an 18-karat gold case and a black dial with silver subdials, price upon request, at H & H Jewels.



INTERMIX



Miami City Ballet

Eye-Opening Art

Miami is host to world premieres, emerging talent and modern works that will excite art lovers this spring.

BY SHARON STELLO

While smash hits are always crowd pleasers, audiences sometimes crave a stimulating new piece or a different interpretation of a classic that elicits unexpected emotions. An edgy play, art exhibit or dance production delivers an element of surprise that strays from the familiar, yet still captures the hearts of viewers.

Just as springtime brings renewal in nature, several breakthrough shows are ready to emerge on the local art scene this season. The

Miami City Ballet presents a salute to choreographers that have taken the dance form in new directions. Meanwhile, the Florida Grand Opera is poised to grab attention as it brings “The Consul” to Miami for the first time. The New World Symphony features fresh talent—graduates of top music programs—and the Actors’ Playhouse in Coral Gables supports the creation of new works. If you check out one of the following innovative shows, prepare to be impressed.

“Points of Departure: Program IV”

THROUGH APRIL 12; ZIFF BALLET OPERA HOUSE

The Miami City Ballet presents “Points of Departure: Program IV,” concluding its season with a celebration of innovative choreographers.

“My favorite is the funny 30-minute ballet masterpiece, ‘The Concert,’ featuring music from Chopin,” shares Paola Peschiera, concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami. A lighthearted look at human relationships, this is the ballet company’s first presentation of the piece. The troupe’s production also

includes a world premiere by Justin Peck, “Heatscape,” which features a set design by street artist Shepard Fairey and presents a unique mix of costumes, dance and design. The last piece in the set is “Raymonda Variations,” choreographed by George Balanchine to excerpts from Glazunov’s score.

(1300 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-929-7010; miamicityballet.org)

“The Organ Symphony”

THROUGH APRIL 12; NEW WORLD CENTER, MIAMI BEACH

Established nearly three decades ago, the New World Symphony prepares



graduates of top music programs for leadership roles in orchestras around the globe. In April, the company will present Saint-Saens' dramatic "Organ Symphony" under the baton of its own Stéphane Denève, who was recently named the principal guest conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra. Featuring a magnificent pipe organ and treasured melodies, the program is rounded out with Honegger's "Summer Pastoral," a peaceful ode to the Swiss Alps, and selections from Poulenc's playful piece, "The Model Animals." Additionally, the audience will be treated to a reading of popular fables upon which the music is based. (500 17th St., Miami Beach; 305-673-3331; nws.edu)

"Vik Muniz: Poetics of Perception"

THROUGH APRIL 19; LOWE ART MUSEUM

Under the artistic hand of Brazilian-born Vik Muniz, unusual materials like toys, magazine clippings and even garbage transform into recognizable art pieces. In his "Pictures of Color" series, famous works like Claude Monet's "Haystack" and Paul Gauguin's "Still Life with Puppies" are rendered using thousands of Pantone color swatches; meanwhile, portraits of silver screen sirens such as Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly and Bette Davis are assembled using thousands of diamonds to resemble digitized images and produce a dazzling effect. After creating these unique pieces, Muniz photographs them to take on a different quality; he compares pixels in digital photos to an impressionist painter's brushstrokes on canvas. Muniz



Clockwise from top left: New World Center; "WWW (World Map)," from "Pictures of Junk" (2008) by Vik Muniz; "The Consul" at Ziff Ballet Opera House

represented Brazil in the Venice Biennale in 2001 and now his works are on display at the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami in Coral Gables. (1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables; 305-284-3535; miami.edu/lowe)

"The Consul"

MAY 9-16; ZIFF BALLET OPERA HOUSE

This spring, the Florida Grand Opera will present Gian Carlo Menotti's "The Consul," a gripping show about a woman struggling with a police state's bureaucracy in attempts to acquire a visa for her family to leave the country. "An opera many people have heard of, but not many have seen, 'The Consul' premiered on Broadway and enjoyed a spectacular

run. For the first time, this great work of the mid-20th century will debut in Miami," says Felipe Toro, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton Bal Harbour, Miami. "This opera truly speaks to the communities that have come from exile all over the world. ... Living in a totalitarian state, that sense of desperation and the loss of hope—many people in this country, especially in South Florida, [have] experienced those issues and can relate. This opera truly will impact the local community." (1300 Biscayne Blvd.; 800-741-1010; fgo.org)

"The Book Club Play"

MAY 13 - JUNE 7; MIRACLE THEATRE, CORAL GABLES

Members of a book club become the focus of a documentary film

in this comedy by Karen Zacarias. The camera rolls in this hilarious production of "The Book Club Play" as they engage in intimate conversations about life and literature. A provocative new member and some unexpected titles take the group in surprising directions. The comedy is presented by Actors' Playhouse, a nonprofit established in 1988 that is now billed as South Florida's largest self-producer of critically acclaimed dramatic and musical theater for adults and children. Part of the group's mission is to support the creation of new works and maintain its venue, the historic Miracle Theatre, which is a former movie house designed in an art deco style. (280 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables; 305-444-9293; actorsplayhouse.org) **C**

Travel Plans

Local concierges share their top recommendations for visitors to experience the city two ways this spring.

SECTION BY SHARON STELLO



THE BEAT GOES ON

Make note of these Miami hot spots to enjoy live music, as recommended by **Joaquin Pastora**, head concierge at The Westin Colonnade, Coral Gables.



Mango's Tropical Cafe



Blue Martini



Kukaramakara

DOWN BY THE BAY

During the day, get your toes tapping at the Bayside Market. “Marina [Stage] ... offers exceptional choices for outdoor live entertainment seven days a week,” Pastora says. “Live bands perform a variety of musical genres ranging from rock [to] classic rock, rhythm and blues, disco, oldies [and] Latin. Besides the Bayside Marina Stage, other venues [at the market-place] such as Off The Hookah offer live entertainment. I recommend Bayside [for] ... the best selection to be entertained by live music.” (401 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-577-3344; baysidemarketplace.com)

DANCE PARTY

For lunch, head over to Mango’s Tropical Cafe. “[It] is a destination and music hot spot in South Beach,” Pastora says. “They have the best live entertainment ... and dancing that Miami can offer ... nonstop, seven days a week from the afternoon to after midnight. ... It’s definitely my priority destination for live music, dancing and live shows, [which] are amazing, such as conga, samba, belly

dancing [and tributes to] Michael Jackson and Celia Cruz, to mention a few.” A menu of continental, Latin, Mexican, Italian and Caribbean dishes are served as well as drinks like mojitos, margaritas, beer and wine. (900 Ocean Dr., Miami Beach; 305-673-4422; mangos.com)

FEELING BLUE

Slide into happy hour and stay for the music at Blue Martini. “Any guest who likes to have a phenomenal time in Miami and wishes to entertain with live music and a disc jockey, Blue Martini [in] Brickell is the place to be,” Pastora shares. “[It] offers a casual patio vibe with live entertainment [and] a VIP room. They have a selection of 42 martinis and offer happy hours from 4-8 p.m. [with] half-off all beverages seven days a week.” Blue Martini has a live band every day from 8 p.m. to midnight and a DJ afterward until closing. “It’s definitely an awesome venue to entertain you and have a great time in the evening,” Pastora says. (900 S. Miami Ave., Ste. 250; 305-981-2583; bluemartinilounge.com)

ROCK ON

At night, take a seat for a headliner show at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood. “[That’s] the place to go for entertainment and live music,” Pastora says. “... The sound of music is endless. Hard Rock Live is a 5,500-seat, multi-purpose arena that brings many top-notch singers and bands such as Bette Midler, who will be performing on May 8 and 9. The Center Bar, located in the heart of the casino, offers live music and a DJ spinning all weekend long.” (1 Seminole Way, Hollywood; 866-502-7529; seminolehardrockhollywood.com)

SALSA SENSATION

Keep the party going at Kukaramakara, a 4,000-square-foot nightclub in Brickell—the place to go for salsa dancing and merengue music, according to Pastora. The Kukaramakara band plays every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, starting at 12:30 a.m. The club also features HOGAO, a bistro that serves traditional Colombian cuisine. (1250 S. Miami Ave.; 305-577-7779; kukaramakara.us)



CELEBRATION DESTINATIONS

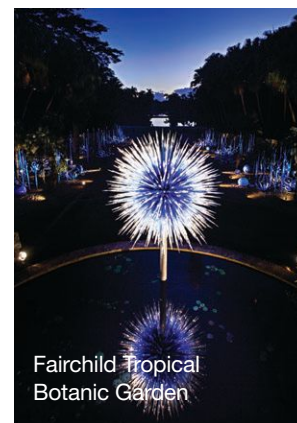
For any special occasion, there are plenty of breathtaking Miami settings to gather the group in style—just follow these tips from **Vicky Reyes**, chief concierge at SLS South Beach.



Venetian Pool



Pérez Art Museum Miami



Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

MEDITERRANEAN OASIS

Built in 1923, the Venetian Pool in Coral Gables—drained and refilled daily in the spring and summer with 820,000 gallons of freshwater from artesian wells—is a great place for groups, especially with children, to cool off or splash around. “A grand waterfall, bridge and water-filled caves ... are a few of the many features that make this pool an attractive destination,” Reyes says. Palm trees, elegant loggias and porticos add to the beautiful surroundings. Patios or shady beach areas can be rented for parties, with tables, chairs and food included; a nearby concession stand also sells snacks. (2701 De Soto Blvd., Coral Gables; 305-460-5306; coralgables.com)

GARDEN PARADISE

Another outdoor daytime option Reyes recommends is Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, which offers a lush paradise for strolling and taking in the scenery. Families have plenty of space to spread out and explore the grounds together. Groups of 20 or more also have the option to sign up two weeks in advance for a tram tour or guided walking tour with a buffet-style or boxed lunch. Adding to the natural beauty, the “Chihuly at Fairchild:

A Garden of Glass” exhibit runs through May 31 with artist Dale Chihuly’s colorful glass sculptures on display—and they light up on Thursday and Sunday nights for a special experience. (10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables; 305-667-1651; fairchildgarden.org)

OCEANFRONT PROPERTY

Set on the shore of Biscayne Bay, The Barnacle Historic State Park’s scenic grounds, including a landscaped lawn and many large trees, make a great picnic setting; a covered outdoor pavilion with picnic tables may be rented for private events. After the meal, visitors can enjoy a guided tour of the historic home. Additionally, the park hosts concert and movie series, old-time dances, yoga classes and other activities that are sure to keep visitors busy. (3485 Main Hwy., Coconut Grove; 305-442-6866; floridastateparks.org)

OLD WORLD SPLENDOR

Another must-see is The Ancient Spanish Monastery, where groups can listen to a concert featuring the impressive church pipe organ, or admire the historic architecture and gardens, including more than 20 acres of rare palms, Spanish

oaks and banyans. Originally built in northern Spain in the 12th century, the monastery was seized and sold after a social revolution in the 1830s. The cloisters and outbuildings were dismantled stone by stone, shipped to the U.S. and later reassembled over 19 months; the monastery now hosts regular visiting hours Monday through Saturday until 4:30 p.m. (16711 W. Dixie Hwy., Miami Beach; 305-945-1461; spanishmonastery.com)

ARTFUL SPACE

The last stop Reyes suggests is Pérez Art Museum Miami, which collects and exhibits modern and contemporary art from around the world. It appeals to a wide range of visitors, making it a good choice for groups. To make the experience interactive, go to the visitor services desk to request a Family Pack filled with activity sheets, pencil kits for sketching, and a scavenger hunt to encourage exploration of the galleries. Then step outside of this impressive building—designed by Pritzker Prize-winning Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron—for sweeping views of Biscayne Bay and an outdoor sculpture garden. (1103 Biscayne Blvd.; 305-375-3000; pamm.org) C



Queens of the kitchen

Meet five chefs in South Florida who are changing the way we view the restaurant business.

BY MICHELLE FRANZEN MARTIN

Beyond knowing how to cook, the job description of a chef is demanding, requiring creativity to conceptualize recipes, an innate attention to detail and, above all, the utmost passion for the craft. Pair that with few to no days off and extensive work hours, and it's a wonder that anyone meets the qualifications, let alone remains interested in the opportunity to work behind the scenes of a restaurant. The industry has been a male-dominated business for quite some time, but in South Florida, a handful of women have assumed the responsibility of managing a kitchen and are making a strong impact on the city's culinary scene at several of the most sought-after eateries around town.



CARLA PELLEGRINO

EXECUTIVE CHEF

TOUCHE ROOFTOP LOUNGE & RESTAURANT

After amassing countless culinary honors along the Las Vegas strip, Pellegrino took her talents to Miami, where she enjoyed great fanfare for the opening of Touche Rooftop Lounge & Restaurant, her new Italian eatery, last spring. For the acclaimed chef, whose impressive resume includes a stint on the 10th season of Bravo's "Top Chef" in 2012, the road to success has been a natural progression since she first started helping with her mother's catering business at just 10 years old.

Born in Brazil to a Portuguese father and Italian mother, Pellegrino's skill set in the kitchen covers a range of cuisines but she gives each the attention it needs. "My mixed heritage influences my personality directly—a bit exaggerated sometimes and full of passionate moments—but it helped me to become the chef I am today: firm, strong and certain," she says. "However, I don't think my mixed heritage influences my cuisine, since I chose to work with Italian food, and I try to be very loyal to each cuisine I decide to execute on my stoves."

Her loyalty to European dishes propelled when Pellegrino came to the United States in 1997 to attend the French Culinary Institute (now the International Culinary Center) in New York City. Upon graduation, she helped launch the now-closed Baldoria restaurant in the city's theater district. It was in Las Vegas, however, that she rose to fame. In 2006, she headed west to serve as executive chef of Rao's Las Vegas, coupling classic recipes with her own creations that earned the culinary team an invitation to cook at the esteemed James Beard House in



Clockwise from top: Seafood salad; Executive Chef Carla Pellegrino; Touche Rooftop Lounge & Restaurant interior

New York City.

In the last five years, she worked with Tropicana Las Vegas to reinvent its restaurant, including a name change to Bacio by Carla Pellegrino, and also opened Bratlian

Neapolitan Cantina. Now at the helm of Touche in Miami, she serves traditional yet flavorful dishes in a 7,200-square-foot space that offers panoramic views of the buzzing Miami cityscape.



Breadfruit fish tacos (above) are a specialty dish at Executive Chef Cindy Hutson's Ortanique on the Mile restaurant in Coral Gables.



CINDY HUTSON EXECUTIVE CHEF AND OWNER ORTANIQUE ON THE MILE, CORAL GABLES

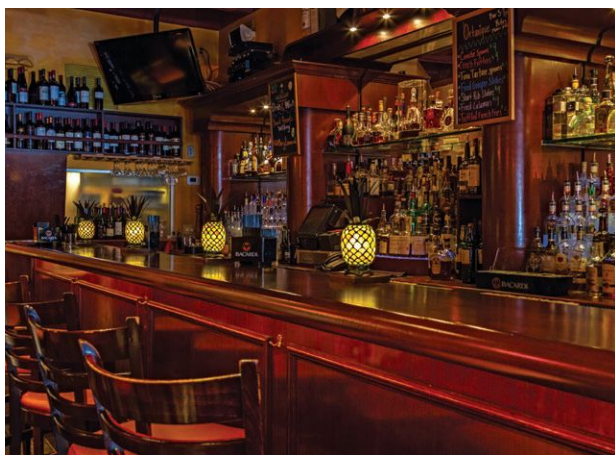
Growing up, Hutson shied away from the children's menu and preferred more sophisticated adult entrees instead. "I ordered the weird stuff as a little kid—liver and onions, tongue, raw clams, frog legs," she remembers. "I guess that set the tone for my experimentation as I grew."

A self-taught chef, she sharpened her culinary skills at home by inventing new recipes and perfecting existing ones. "I was not professionally trained, nor did I ever dream of being a chef," Hutson says. "I just always loved to cook." Her hobby eventually turned into a career when she moved from New Jersey in 1978 to Miami, where she met Delius Shirley, the son of celebrated Jamaican chef Norma Shirley.

After encouraging her to go into the restaurant business, Delius and Hutson opened their first venture,

Norma's on the Beach, in 1994. The eatery attracted masses of tourists during its five years of operation until it shuttered its doors in 1999. However, Hutson's popularity didn't end there. Her resume grew with several new establishments in the ensuing years, including Ortanique Las Vegas and Washington, D.C., in 2001; and Copra in Baltimore, Md., and Bogwalk in Destin, Fla., in 2004. While these restaurants have since closed, today Hutson runs Ortanique on the Mile, a Caribbean hot spot in Coral Gables with a second location in Grand Cayman, as well as The Dunmore in the Bahamas.

Her internationally renowned Caribbean cuisine brings together a unique pairing of ingredients—for instance, breadfruit fish tacos that use the fruit as the shell. "My philosophy on food is simple: It is always evolving," she explains. "... That's why it is fun for me to study food history, origins of food and how it traveled from one destination to another and who brought it there."



MICHELLE BERNSTEIN EXECUTIVE CHEF AND OWNER SEAGRAPE, MIAMI BEACH

With a James Beard Award, several famed Miami restaurants and multiple appearances on shows like "Iron Chef America" and "Top Chef," it's safe to say Bernstein is celebrated by many around the world. But for the celebrity chef and restaurateur, Miami is the only place where she would want to stretch her culinary wings.

"We are the crossroads of the Americas and becoming a global hub for business and leisure travel," she says. "All these [factors] are ... influencing everything from our food to our art and culture. Combine that with the abundance of fabulous local fish, pork, vegetables [and] fruit—we're a culinary playground for chefs and eaters."

A Miami native, Bernstein has created her own empire in this playground since the late 1990s when she first donned the executive chef hat at Tantra in Miami Beach and Azul in the Mandarin Oriental, Miami hotel. Several years later, Bernstein and her



Michelle Bernstein recently opened Seagrape in Miami Beach.

business partner and husband, David Martinez, opened the legendary Michy's in 2006. The year 2008 proved to be another big year, as she won the James Beard Award for the best chef in the South, published her cookbook, "Cuisine a Latina," and opened Sra. Martinez, which has since closed.

Her bakery Crumb on Parchment opened in the Design District four years ago. Most recently, in 2014, she decided to reinvent Michy's and also



Fresh, local bounty is the focus at Seagrape.

launched Seagrape in November at the Thompson Miami Beach hotel.

Through it all, Bernstein maintains a distinct cooking style, which she credits to her upbringing. "[My heritage] instilled a love for diversity and gave me ample opportunities to try a lot of different foods," she says. "Also, growing up in a home with family that loved food [had] a big hand in my own development first as an eater, then as a cook."

SEAGRAPE INTERIOR PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMPSON MIAMI BEACH; PLATE AND PORTRAIT PHOTOS BY MICHAEL PISARRI

PAULA DASILVA

EXECUTIVE CHEF

3030 OCEAN, FORT LAUDERDALE

The restaurant business has been engrained in DaSilva from a young age. Working at her family's Brazilian restaurant in Massachusetts as a child and then helping her parents open two restaurants in South Florida during her teen years naturally led her to a degree in culinary arts.

"I learned at an early age the importance of hard work and having strong work ethics," she says. "I also learned how to properly season food from my parents. Both of them were really good cooks."

A job at 3030 Ocean followed suit as she made a name for herself in Miami. A turning point came when she was a runner-up on season five of "Hell's Kitchen" with Gordon Ramsay. After the season ended, DaSilva was named executive chef of 1500 Degrees at Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach. Her career came full circle when 1500 Degrees shut down, and she returned to 3030 Ocean.



Paula DaSilva creates dishes like the fried snapper (top left) with locally sourced ingredients at 3030 Ocean.



There, she practices a farm-to-table approach with dishes created from locally sourced ingredients, such as the fried snapper served with shishito peppers, bok choy and sesame Thai chili sauce. Her cooking style has received many rave reviews and, in 2013, she was invited to prepare a multicourse meal based on seasonal ingredients at the James Beard House. "For me it's all about the ingredients,



the product and where it is coming from," she says. "I have a solid relationship with most of our local farmers and fisherman, and it's important for me to nurture that. Without a great product, you won't have great food. From there, we keep it simple. My style has evolved so much through the years and, the older I get, the more comfortable I become with letting the food stand out on its own."

MOLLY BRANDT

EXECUTIVE CHEF

RESTAURANT MICHAEL SCHWARTZ, SOUTH BEACH

No stranger to culinary competition, Brandt was in the ninth season of Bravo's "Top Chef" in 2011 and more recently appeared on the Food Network's "Cutthroat Kitchen" last February. Before she starred on television, she was already familiar with the



happenings of reality cooking shows. While attending the Culinary Institute of America, she had a gig as an extern for Food Network, where she helped prep for shows like "Emeril Live" and "Semi-Homemade Cooking."

Despite her past high-profile opportunities, Brandt keeps the focus on the food rather than the fame. "... I put a lot of thought into my dishes to ensure that it has a sense of a theme, has good culinary balance and is made with heart," she explains.

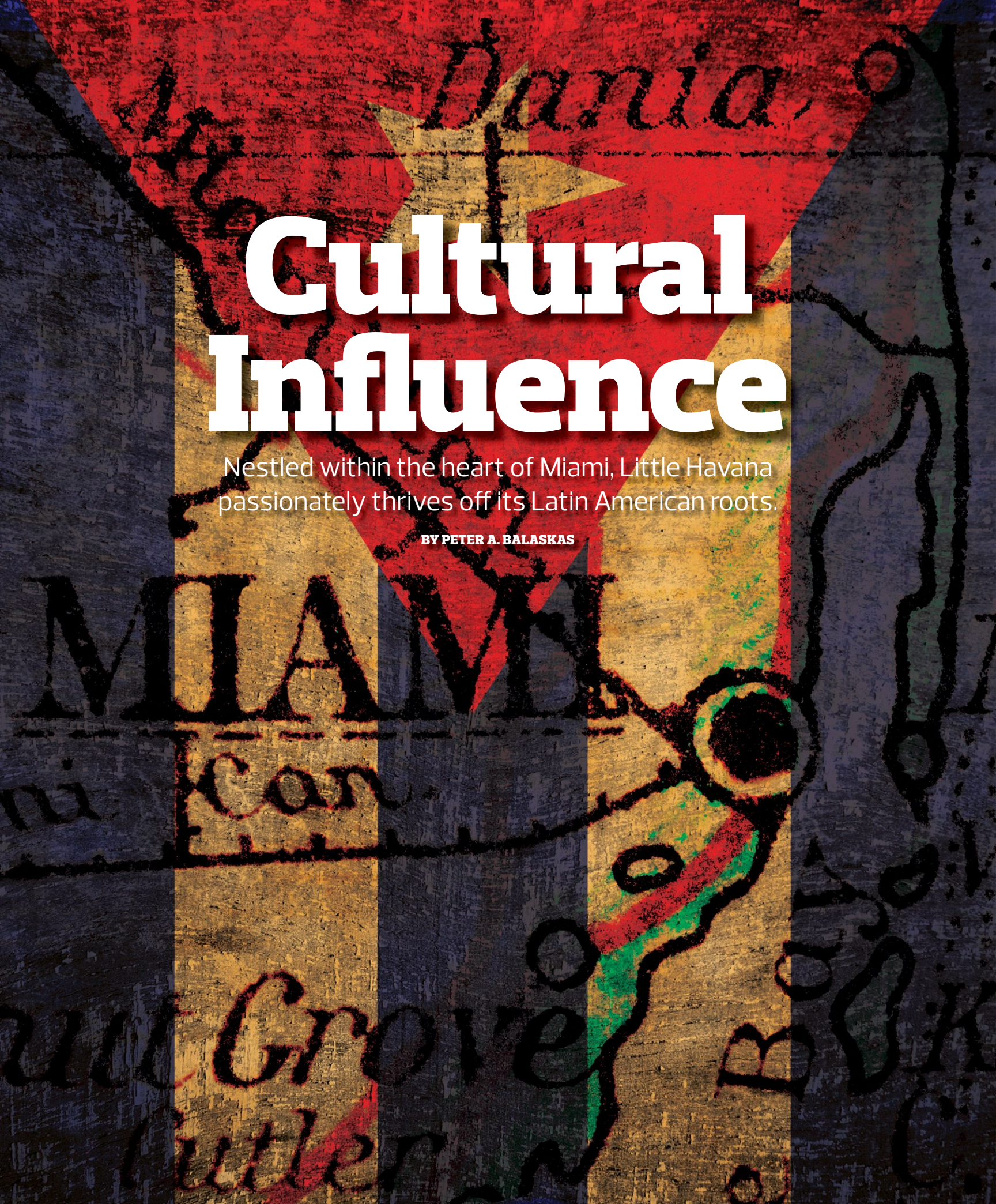
Today, she practices this approach at Restaurant Michael Schwartz at The Raleigh South Beach. She brings

to the restaurant a unique resume, which includes a role as executive chef at 150 Central Park, an upscale dining option on the Royal Caribbean's Allure of the Seas cruise ship.

Whether on the water or on land, Brandt's culinary creations stem from her travels. "I am from Minnesota, so Midwest influences always seem to come through," she says. "I can't help it. However, I have been lucky to live and work in many different places, from New York to China to Italy to a cruise ship based in the Caribbean, and all of those experiences contribute to any dish I create." **C**



Molly Brandt applies a hospitable approach to her dishes at Restaurant Michael Schwartz at The Raleigh South Beach.



Cultural Influence

Nestled within the heart of Miami, Little Havana passionately thrives off its Latin American roots.

BY PETER A. BALASKAS

The vibrant neighborhood of Little Havana is far from a hasty, fabricated replica of the largest city in Cuba; it's an authentic community filled with the culture of Cuban immigrants who built a home out of a place that was initially a refuge in the 1970s. Though the residents eventually left the island behind, they brought with them traditions unique to the Latin culture that now define Little Havana. This cosmopolitan neighborhood continues to draw more tourists with each passing year, but the preservation of its Latin roots will always be evident.

At the Cuban Memorial Boulevard Park on 13th Avenue, second- and third-generation Cubans gather around plaques that outline their heritage. Nearby, at Domino Park, tables are full of senior citizens loudly slapping down their domino tiles on the boards and bellowing out victory calls or grumbles of defeat. Meanwhile, moviegoers line up at the Tower Theater to see a Spanish classic, such as Pedro Almodóvar's "Volver" or Guillermo del Toro's Oscar-winning "Pan's Labyrinth."

Wafting through the air is the alluring aroma from exotic dishes combined with scents from the numerous cigar shops, whose "tabacaleros" (tobacconists) hand-roll cigars in styles that have been shared through the generations—all set to the tune of lively salsa music playing in the background.

"[Little Havana] has that flair of yesteryear," explains Pati Vargas, executive director of Viernes Culturales, a cultural and arts fair that occurs monthly in Little Havana. "[It] brings you that yesteryear, familiar back-home feeling, whether you are from Cuba, Colombia or [anywhere else]; you always have that sustained mix."

For those touring this Latin-flavored locale, it's a magical journey to new

Freedom Tower on Biscayne Boulevard



discoveries. And for those locals whose families have lived here for decades, Little Havana is home.

ICONIC LANDMARKS

Two distinct places within Little Havana symbolize the neighborhood's dynamic genesis: Tower Theater on Calle Ocho (Eighth Street) and the Freedom Tower on Biscayne Boulevard. According to George Neary, associate vice president of cultural tourism at the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, when approximately 250,000 immigrants were escaping Fidel Castro's communist regime from the 1960s to the early 1970s, the Tower Theater—with its captivating art deco architectural style and massive 40-foot tower—was the epicenter for introducing American culture and customs to Cuban refugees.

The Tower Theater—which USA Today in 2011 declared "one of the 10 great places to see a movie in splendor"—was among the first venues in Miami to debut Spanish films. It is now a home for all forms of arts and entertainment, including the Miami International Film Festival,

which takes place in the spring; this year's event ended March 15.

Similarly, the Freedom Tower, which originally housed The Miami News, was converted by the federal government and served as a resettlement station from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, a period when 130,000 Cubans emigrated from the port of Mariel in Cuba.

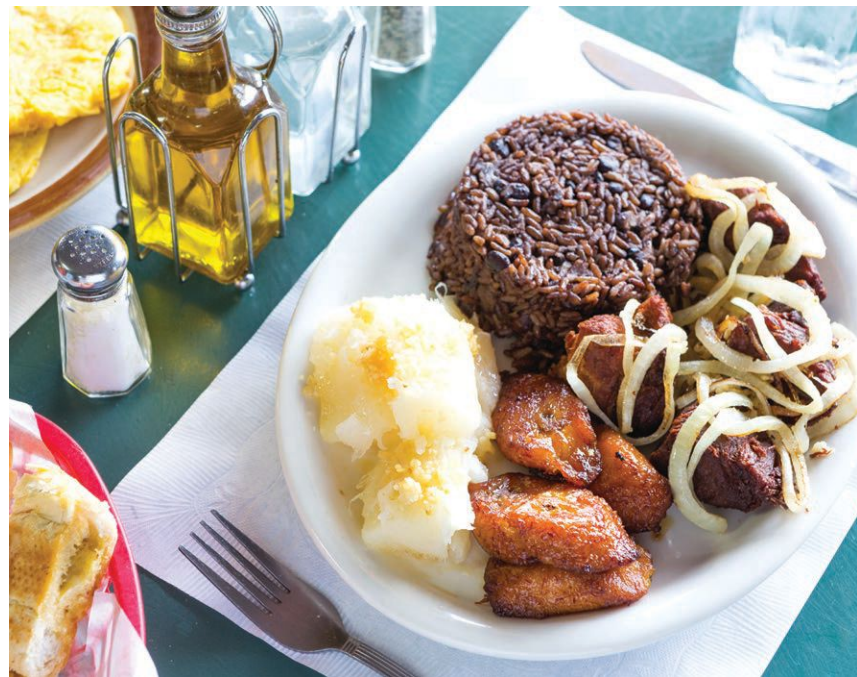
"Little by little, as the neighborhood drew new immigrants, it changed like neighborhoods in America do," Neary says. "The Freedom Tower ... looked



Tower Theater on Calle Ocho (Eighth Street)

as their Statue of Liberty in a sense because it's so unique, and it stands out in its architecture. [Most locals] remember [being] kids waiting in lines there, ... [and] they received food stamps, education and all kinds of other amenities."

Displayed in the colloquial "Tower of Dreams" is the 60-foot New World mural, which was repainted by The Miami Artisans in



El Pub Restaurant offers classic Cuban cuisine with a menu of daily specials.

1988 and is part of the Miami Dade College Museum and Galleries of Art and Design's collection that resides in the tower. Its location in Little Havana couldn't be more relevant: The painting depicts Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León's arrival to the New World, and serves as an homage to one of the first accounts of the blending of cultures throughout America's history. In addition to serving as a museum and cultural center, the Freedom Tower was also designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2008.

FOR THE PEOPLE

Solidifying the celebration of its Latin American roots, Little Havana dedicated areas of its neighborhood to important figures of the Cuban culture. At the Cuban Memorial Boulevard Park, there are a vast number of monuments honoring heroes who have fought for Cuban independence against Spain, such as José Martí and Gen. Antonio Maceo. A statue dedicated to the Virgin Mary is also present at the two-block park, as well as an eternal flame that honors 94 Cuban exiles who died in the 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion.

And the most obvious indicator

of Cuba is a 16-foot raised map of the island that bears an inscription by Martí reading, "La patria es agonia y deber" (the homeland is agony and duty).

Sauntering west along Calle Ocho, visitors will stumble upon "Paseo de las Estrellas" (Walkway of the Stars) between 12th and 17th avenues, where the names of famous Latino entertainment stars are engraved in the sidewalk to serve as a reminder of their accomplishments. The pink marble stars along the sidewalk honor the likes of Celia Cruz, a famous Cuban salsa dancer, as well as Gloria Estefan and Willy Chirino.

Also to explore is the Cuba Ocho Art and Research Center, whose mission is to promote art, theater, music and literature, and also sponsor cultural events focused on Cuban artists based throughout Florida. The center's expansive library and art collection spans from 1850 to 1958 and includes works by notable Latino artists, including names like Miguel Loredó, Silvia Fernández Arrojó and Maria Luisa Rios.

A TASTE OF CUBA

Sightseeing alone allows visitors to absorb the local culture of Little



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Locals stop by Domino Park, a popular destination in the neighborhood for daily games.



Havana, but the neighborhood entices visitors even more with savory Cuban cuisine prepared in the kitchens of the numerous family-owned restaurants in town. Down on Calle Ocho, rows of restaurants specialize in signature dishes such as “pan con bistec” (flank steak sandwiches), “pollo asado al ajillo” (roasted garlic chicken) and “pastelitos” (pastries).

Since 1974, locals have flocked to Heliodoro Coro’s family style

restaurant, El Exquisito, at the center of Calle Ocho. Offering cooking “direct from grandmother’s kitchen,” you can’t go wrong ordering any item on the menu. Some of the favorite dishes are “vacca frita” (shredded and fried lime and garlic beef) and “tostones” (fried green plantains)—both washed down with a refreshing fruit juice like guava, mango or pear.

Next door at El Pub Restaurant, the Rivera family partnered with

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE BY KIKOR.COM

Tobacconists at El Titan De Bronze, a family-owned shop in Little Havana, hand-roll cigars in traditional styles.



Coro to introduce more traditional tastes for the community. And another classic and longstanding restaurant in Little Havana is Versailles. For more than 40 years, Versailles has appealed to palates with a hearty menu of breakfast, lunch and dinner selections. Patrons can choose from an array of notable daily specials or opt for a sampler dish for a broad taste of Cuban cuisine. The popular Criollo sampler comes with yellow rice, black beans, “ropa vieja” (shredded beef in tomato sauce, literally translated as “old clothes”), fried pork chunks, ham croquette, sweet plantains, a Cuban tamale and cassava with Cuban “mojo” (a concoction of lime juice and olive oil mixed with garlic and oregano).

No matter the venue, diners will find edible delights—oftentimes smothered with onions, bay leaf, peppers and mojo. And it’s all the more common to complete a meal with a “cortadito” (Cuban espresso), followed by a stroll down Calle Ocho to Azucar ice cream parlor, where

the frozen homemade Cuban treat is crafted in striking flavors that are named for the area. For example, Domino Park is represented by the domino flavor, which is essentially cookies and cream, and the double cherry ice cream is deemed Willy Cherrino, a nod to Cuban singer Willy Chirino.

For aficionados who strive for more traditional sensations as a nightcap, Calle Ocho is also home to the finest cigar shops in America, including the El Credito Cigar Factory, Sosa Family Cigars and El Titan de Bronze. Each one offers a wide assortment of hand-rolled cigars and a lounge area to enjoy every puff.

“It’s a joy for me to be able to bring people there so they can have one more Miami moment right under your nose,” Neary says of the neighborhood. “We have all of these wonderful aspects that are available, that are very close to each other, and it gives me, as a local, and tourists a chance to experience the breadth of heritage and culture they can’t get anywhere else.” **C**

Friday Lights

On the last Friday of every month, a festival—Viernes Culturales—combines all forms of Latino entertainment on Calle Ocho (Eighth Street) between 13th and 17th avenues.

Visitors and locals can listen and dance to the musical stage performances; taste and devour exotic, multicultural cuisines; watch films at the Tower Theater; and take a free walking tour conducted by Miami Dade College professor Paul George.

The streets themselves offer a visual treat, but for a more curated spectacle, art lovers can stroll through the exhibits that are set up on the streets, plazas and indoor galleries. “We have 35 booths, and all of them are artisans; some of them have been with us for over 10 years,” says festival director Pati Vargas. “It’s been growing and growing.”

Vargas loves the challenges and possibilities the event creates: “We have patrons and snowbirds that book their visits around the festival,” Vargas says. “Local families call me the day after and tell me what they want, [ask] how was last month, and then they ask, ‘How is the family?’ I love that.”

The remaining dates to attend the festival this spring are April 24, May 29 and June 26. (viernes culturales.org)



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All in the Details

Miami's renowned art deco architecture captures the spirit of a bygone era.

BY GWYN HERBEIN AND BESPOKE CONCIERGE MAGAZINE STAFF

Simply put, Miami is a visually stunning locale. In addition to a vibrant public art scene and everlasting white sand beaches, it is shaped by more than 800 structures rich with history in an area known as the Art Deco District. The neighborhood, which is roughly bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Alton Road on the west, Dade Boulevard to the north and Sixth Street to the south, is comprised of buildings that stem from Miami's rapid development in the heyday of its tourism boom during the late 1920s through the 1940s.

A LOOK BACK

Miami Beach was officially incorporated back in 1915, and initially faced a few troubles that would presumably hamper a city's growth. Much of the area was devastated by a Category 4 hurricane in September 1926, and while exact figures were not recorded, anywhere from 400 to more than 800 people died as a result of the storm that also struck Fort Lauderdale and other cities in South Florida. Then came the Great Depression. But as the tough economic times were coming to an end, a crop of local, ambitious architects—including Albert Anis, L. Murray Dixon and Henry Hohauser—ensured Miami's prosperity and its moniker as

the place to see and be seen.

The art deco style took over the streets in the 1930s, as each of the aforementioned architects as well as other notable names constructed their buildings in similar fashion with an emphasis on symmetrical framework and geometric forms like chevrons, spheres and rectangles. Other hallmarks of the style that began popping up in Miami included neon-lit facades, nautical porthole windows and smooth concrete surfaces.

However, like many architectural trends, by the mid-1940s, art deco had fallen out of favor with designers and builders. As the demographics and economics of the Miami Beach area shifted, so did its building

A few years before construction began in the area, the art deco style made its debut at an exposition in Paris, and architects across the pond applied elements like geometric patterns, glass blocks and terrazzo floors in their designs. Today, the intricate details can still be found in the candy- and pastel-colored hotels, cafes, movie theaters and residences that dot Miami Beach. And thanks to preservation efforts from local and national organizations, these architectural gems will shine for generations to come.

priorities. In the 1970s, many developers sought to buy up land on Ocean Drive and other prominent locations with a plan to raze the buildings to make room for modern sites.

Around the same time, Miami resident Barbara Baer Capitman and her son John were searching for a project to honor the nation's bicentennial in 1976. Through partnerships with local designers Leonard Horowitz and Lillian Barber, the Capitmans identified the district with a high concentration of 1930s buildings that they felt could achieve historic status. By the end of 1978, the group had drummed up enough public interest to justify incorporating their partnerships officially as the Miami Design

Preservation League (MDPL). It was the group's efforts, which included a weeklong festival to showcase this section of the city to locals and visitors, that helped cement the district's place on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

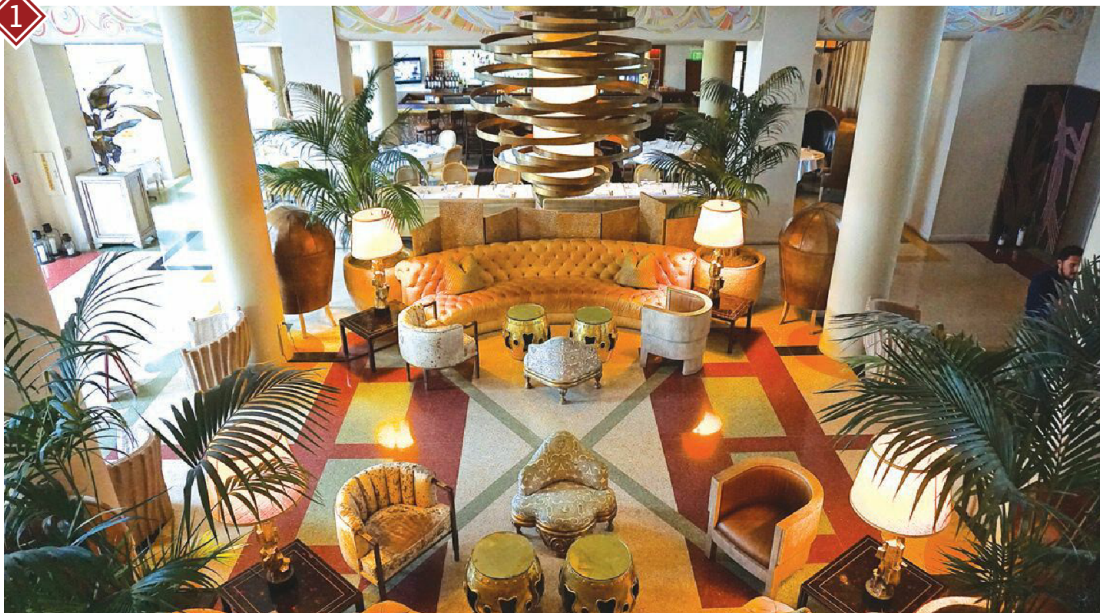
The National Register divides the district into three distinct areas, based on location and primary building use: the seasonal hotel area, encompassing Ocean Drive and Collins Avenue; the commercial area of Washington Avenue and Lincoln Road; and the residential area. Within these three areas lie countless streets to explore, each with its own unique mix of hotels, restaurants and private homes that embody the art deco style.



Exploring the District Today

The following five buildings in the Art Deco District offer dining, shopping and accommodations for visitors.

1



THE TIDES SOUTH BEACH

Located at 1220 Ocean Dr., The Tides South Beach was the tallest building in Miami when it was built in 1936. Its height wasn't the only reason it captivated passersby. Art deco master L. Murray Dixon designed The Tides hotel to imitate the sleek lines of the automobile and airplane technologies that were taking over in the 1930s. The monolithic structure is a symmetrical block with a center strip that protrudes from the rectangular surface, accentuating its flat rooftops and sharp corners. At the ground level, The Tides' porthole windows mark the entrance to a completely remodeled interior. The lobby features gold tufted couches, a metallic spiral chandelier and a pastel mural to evoke its original era. The glamour continues in the guest rooms with geometric furniture, patterned rugs and midcentury-inspired room dividers surrounded by sunburst wall decor. And even the outdoor pool area nods to art deco with chevron walls and a porthole mirror covering the cabanas.

2



THE WEBSTER

Henry Hohauser was one of the principal architects responsible for Miami's art deco design palette. He applied his own twist to the style by emphasizing windows and playing with the facades in order to echo the ocean. In 1939, he built a hotel on Collins Avenue that is now a 20,000-square-foot fashion emporium opened in 2009 by French founders Laure Hériard Dubreuil, Frederic Dechnik and Milan Vukmirovic. The Webster boasts three stories stocked with apparel ranging from luxury sportswear to couture outfits for men and women. The top level also provides gallery, office and event space for pop-up shops and fashion shows.

In order to preserve its original design, the staircases, ceilings and the lobby's terrazzo floor were restored, and there are 1930s motifs throughout the space. Meanwhile, the exterior shines with neon lights on the edges of the building as well as in the marquee. Finally, the perfect symmetry of the windows and the ornate details that form a border in the center of the facade offer a prelude to the sophistication to be experienced while shopping inside.

3



11TH STREET DINER

At the intersection of 11th Street and Washington Avenue, there's a parked trailer that has been in place since 1992. The portable structure is a Paramount dining car built in 1948, which originally served Wilkes-Barre, Penn., as a diner. Around 40 years later, it was dismantled and found its new home in Miami's Art Deco District, where its gleaming stainless steel exterior and neon signage fit in perfectly with the surrounding buildings.

DINER PHOTO BY WALLY GOBETZ; THE WEBSTER PHOTO BY TERENCE FAIRCLOTH





COLONY THEATRE

The entertainment industry has been an important part of the overall culture in South Beach since the 1930s. One of the most popular venues to watch a film was the Colony Theatre on the corner of Lenox Avenue and Lincoln Road. Built by architect R.A. Benjamin, the space opened in January 1935 as part of the expanding movie theater chain owned by Paramount Pictures.

In the mid-1970s, the movie palace turned into a mid-sized performance venue to accommodate more than just movies. As the years went by, the structure fell into disrepair until a renovation project was approved in 2002 and completed in 2006. Now a fully restored 415-seat venue, the theater's lighted marquee and geometric flooring evoke art deco glamour.



The \$6.5 million project also included pristine terrazzo floors and a new entryway framed by bold lines in the awnings.

Located in the heart of South Beach, it is the perfect host to film festivals, a Broadway series, comedy acts and concerts annually.

This spring, Florida Grand Ballet will present the world premiere of "Anna Karenina," a production based on the novel by Russian author Leo Tolstoy that tells the tragic affair of a married woman who falls in love with another man, on April 10 at 8 p.m.

HOTEL ASTOR

When taking a stroll along Washington Avenue, one of the many hotels that demands attention is the magnificent Hotel Astor, built in 1936. "The front facade has a lot of oolitic limestone, which is naturally occurring in Florida, so it was an inexpensive building material, but it's been treated so it's got a pinkish hue that looks like Italian marble," explains Judith Frankel, director of programs and outreach at MDPL, of the interesting exterior.

A glowing sign that reads the hotel name complements the stainless steel door with eight square windows that offer a peak inside. Once indoors, the art deco splendor continues. The lobby has very era-specific details, including the original terrazzo floors and Vitrolite wall panels as well as furniture in pastel hues like mint and yellow.

The boutique hotel also mixes modern and retro at its latest dining venture called The Downstairs. The lounge offers a creative menu of cocktails and inventive fare. In the background, musicians perform during themed evenings. Be sure to attend on a Tuesday night when 1920s jazz and blues recalls the music of yesteryear. **C**



After a renovation to restore it to its original art deco style, today the 11th Street Diner is a 24-hour eatery, popularly frequented by late-night visitors. A specialty menu available from 11 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. offers sandwiches, burgers and, of course, breakfast dishes like corned beef hash and omelets. In 2008, the diner appeared on the Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives," as host Guy Fieri enjoyed a plate of the apple and raisin pork chops.

COLONY THEATRE PHOTO BY JORG HACKERMANN



TEQUILA

Versus

MESCAL

While one agave-based spirit has been a part of American culture for centuries, its lesser-known cousin has only recently come into the limelight.

BY TIFFANIE WEN

Americans are undoubtedly familiar with tequila. The distilled Mexican spirit is widely advertised and has inspired popular culture with songs like “Tequila Sunrise” and “Margaritaville.” The United States is also the largest consumer of tequila—more than three-quarters of the exports from Mexico are headed north of the border with Germany and Spain trailing in a far second and third place, respectively.

Mescal, on the other hand, is still shrouded in mystery, though that is quickly changing. A close cousin of tequila, mescal is becoming more popular to a sophisticated set in Mexico and the United States as expert mixologists use the spirit to create innovative drinks across the continent. Although it has quietly appeared at authentic Mexican establishments, high-end bars and restaurants are now getting in on the action, stocking a variety of bottles, offering tastings and featuring extensive menus of these agave-based spirits.

“In Mexico City, it is the fanciest bars that are now serving mescal and cocktails made from

mescal,” says Harry Kohlmann, CEO of Miami-based Park Street, an outfit that imports and distributes tequila and mescal across the country. “And we are seeing the same trend in cities in the United States.”

Though tequila and mescal are both distilled liquors made from the fermented juice of agave plants, tequila has been a designated drink since the 1970s, with strict rules directing its production. “Similar to the way that Champagne is a type of sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne, all tequila is a type of mescal, while not all mescal is considered tequila,” Kohlmann explains.

But just because mescal is not considered tequila doesn’t mean that it is lacking in quality. In 1995, mescal warranted its own designation of origin in Mexico, and Kohlmann says that, for the last several years, discerning drinkers have flocked to mescal for its variety and unique taste. There’s also the element of tradition that can only be associated with something that is made in small batches by “mescaleros” who have practiced the custom for generations.





La Biblioteca margarita

Tequila Hot Spots

Try the finest tequilas at these top restaurants in cities across the country.

Los Angeles

Rivera restaurant and bar in downtown LA serves pan-Latin cuisine alongside its extensive menu of tequilas. Rivera is even producing its own brand of the spirit in Mexico, which will be available in personalized bottles for guests to store in lockers. (riverarestaurant.com)

Miami

The Cypress Room offers New American fare—from duck to frog legs, lamb tartare, pheasant and filet mignon—by James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Schwartz. And a huge “beverage book” includes a wide range of tequilas to enjoy. (thecypressroom.com)

New York City

Housed in the basement of Zengo restaurant, La Biblioteca lounge specializes in agave-based spirits, with 400 bottles from small-batch and artisanal producers. Tequila tastings are held every Tuesday evening, and there are lockers for patrons to store their own bottles. (richardsandoval.com)

TEQUILA:

THE CHAMPAGNE OF MEXICO

The demand for tequila saw a spike in the United States during the two world wars, as spirits from Europe were hard to come by, and Prohibition, when it was smuggled across the border. Its origins in Mexico, however, date back much further. It’s believed that the distilled spirit was introduced around the start of the 16th century by the Spanish who invaded Mexico. The drink assumed many names until it was eventually shortened to “tequila,” after a town of the same name in Jalisco, the state in western Mexico that still serves as the heart of production today along with a few other neighboring states.

Mescal can be derived from a variety of agave species, but tequila must be made from the blue agave (a succulent related to the lily), typically grown from eight to 10 years before it’s harvested. A large, sugary bulb called the pina is then cooked, and its juices are left to ferment prior to being distilled.

By law, 100 percent agave tequilas require the use of agave sugars. Purists won’t even drink a margarita made with a lesser level “mixto.” Another major difference between tequilas is how long it’s aged in an oak cask, a process that mellows out the tequila and infuses it with subtle flavors. Unaged tequilas are “blancos” (white or silver), tequilas that are aged two to 12 months are considered “reposado” (rested) and tequilas that are aged for at least a year are labeled “anejo” (aged or vintage).



Agave plants are grown for eight to 10 years before being harvested.



Mayahuel's Oaxacan Old Fashion features mescal and reposado tequila.

According to Robert Day, national beverage coordinator for Richard Sandoval Restaurants, which stocks several types of tequila and mescal in its eateries across the country, the type of oak cask used can largely affect the final product’s flavor. “Most producers use American white oak or French oak. Both offer two totally different styles of spirits,” he says. “The American white oak gives off more of a spicier note in the tequila while French oak imparts more of a softer spirit, almost an elegant style.”

Day adds that the varying taste has

led to a trend of tequila flights. “Most of our guests get very excited to know they will experience the same spirit but with different barrel-aging levels,” he says. For tasting, Day recommends using a tulip shaped glass. “This way you will have the bouquet of the spirit leading directly to your nose,” he explains. “When sipping a tequila or a mescal in a glass with a wide-open rim, you can easily lose the bouquet.”

Tequila is also being paired carefully with cuisine, and when done correctly, it complements all parts of the meal. Day suggests coupling the more peppery tequilas with spicier cuisine. Finer tequilas, on the other hand, like those aged in French oak with a more delicate taste, pair well with desserts and can be used as an after-dinner palate cleanser.

Since the early 2000s, consumption of tequila—particularly super-premium brands—has increased enormously, both in Mexico and the United States. Kohlmann says smaller artisanal tequila producers are experiencing a boom, as part of a wider movement toward craft products. Overall, tequila enjoys a \$2 billion market share, which is huge, especially when compared to its cousin, the more humble mescal.



Mescal is more potent than tequila.

MESCAL: OUT OF TEQUILA'S SHADOW

“Ron Cooper, the founder of Del Maguey [a producer of mescal], says it best: ‘You don’t find mescal, mescal finds you.’ I am truly living proof,” says Justin Shapiro, co-owner and general manager of New York restaurant Mayahuel, which offers several varieties of mescal to an enthusiastic clientele. Shapiro says he fell in love with the spirit after traveling to Oaxaca, Mexico, the birthplace and epicenter of mescal production. “To say the trip changed me would be a drastic understatement, and to say that mescal comes from the most

amazing place on earth would barely do it justice.”

Unlike tequila, with its infusion of millions of marketing dollars and huge industrial facilities, mescal is only made by small producers and is still relatively difficult to find. The Mexican government requires that anything labeled mescal must be produced and bottled in Mexico and cannot be exported in large batches.

Still, Kohlmann adds that some of the brands he imports have seen a 400 percent increase in sales in the United States in the last few months alone—which means it’s not necessary to travel to Oaxaca to experience mescal. Bartenders and mixologists who have discovered the drink are introducing it to consumers in the restaurants and bars that are savvy enough to stock it.

According to experts, drinkers appreciate the boutique taste of mescal that stems from a production process that’s been passed down through the generations and includes roasting the pinas in pit ovens. “We’ve noticed people love to gravitate more toward cocktails and spirits that are using artisanal premium products and, therefore, mescal comes into play,” Day says.

“The primary difference found in mescal (as compared to tequila) is its distinctive smokiness, both in aroma and flavor,” Shapiro adds. “In addition, mescal is more potent—mescal is usually distilled to between 48 and 49 percent alcohol by volume while

tequila is normally distilled to 40 percent alcohol by volume.”

When embarking on a mescal tasting, Day recommends trying no more than three types, beginning with the youngest (blanco) and progressing to the aged mescals (reposado and anejo). “The type of glassware used to taste should also take a heavy role,” he says, recommending a tulip style of glass like a brandy snifter. “In order to understand the spirit, you need to ‘nose’ the spirit.”

According to Kohlmann, producers are beginning to make mescal without the traditional smokiness by steaming the pinas, which he believes is contributing to its growing popularity. “Because mescal can be made with several types of agave, you have more room to create different flavor types than you do with tequila,” he says. “... If you’re an innovative and skilled mixologist, it’s an opportunity to take a product—something no one has heard about—and create a completely new sensation.”

At Mayahuel, for instance, Shapiro says one of the most popular cocktails is the Ron’s Dodge Charger. The drink uses a mescal infused with “chile de arbol” (tree chili peppers) and mixes it with pineapple, lime, agave nectar and smoked salt for a thrilling taste.

Of course, as much as observers love to discuss the differences between tequila and mescal—perhaps over a flight of either one—it’s no secret that they are sometimes

Mescal on the Menu

Metropolitan bars and eateries showcase this emerging spirit in a big way.

Los Angeles

La Cueva features a unique collection of more than 50 types of mescal and inspired cocktails while also hosting live jazz and disc jockeys. (lacuevitabar.com)

Miami

Inside the InterContinental Miami hotel, Toro Toro steakhouse utilizes Latin American flavors in entrees and small plates, and features craft cocktails made with mescal. (torotoromiami.com)

New York City

Mayahuel restaurant and bar stocks more than 40 types of mescal, and specializes in cocktails using both mescal and tequila, like the Oaxacan Old Fashion. (mayahuelny.com)

best enjoyed together. A staple cocktail at Mayahuel is the Oaxacan Old Fashion, which is made of mescal, reposado tequila, agave nectar and Angostura bitters. According to Shapiro, “The right amount of spice and citrus pair incredibly well with both tequila and mescal.” **C**



The mescal-making process involves crushing and roasting the pina.



Mescal can be made from several types of agave, using the sugary pina.

COURTESY OF DEL MAGUEY

ANDREW HOKLING

Gallery Gallivanting

From coast to coast, monthly art walks are celebrating creativity with food, wine and music.

BY JENNIFER PAPPAS YENNIE



LOS ANGELES: IF YOU GO

Grab a bite at Peking Tavern, which is known for its Chinese dumplings, or any of the various food trucks that line the streets. When seeking a mid-walk cocktail, stop by The Varnish or The Association. Locals also flock to Pete's Cafe & Bar, Wood Spoon and Los Angeles Brewing Co. for small plates and libations.

Taking over the ocean-side galleries of Miami and the urban lofts of New York, art walks are expanding in cultural hot spots across the country. Quirky incarnations like Brewery Art Walk in Los Angeles and Walktober Weird Art Walk in Portland, Ore., are also gaining attention in cities large

and small. The type of work varies as much as the locales, where established masters mingle with up-and-comers. In many places, local wineries, restaurants and specialty boutiques join in the monthly celebrations by staying open late, offering food and drink, and adding to the overall effect of a community united by art.

The Last Bookstore in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES

Given its near-perfect weather and flourishing contemporary art scene, Los Angeles is the ideal spot for an art walk. Held the second Thursday of every month from 6-10 p.m., the downtown event includes 50 participating galleries. Located predominantly on Spring and Main

streets between Fourth and Seventh streets, the art walk—which started in 2004—attracts upward of 25,000 monthly guests.

The Hive Gallery, an active member for the past decade, is also one of the oldest standing galleries on the row. Specializing in low-brow or pop surrealism illustrations and paintings, The Hive also rents out studio space to resident artists and groups like Arbrates Agency, a collective that features different Japanese artists on a revolving monthly schedule.

Nathan Cartwright, artist and owner of The Hive, describes the downtown atmosphere as a “celebratory, community vibe” known for attracting visitors from all over the world. Despite the public camaraderie, Cartwright resists putting a label on the art walk as a whole. “Think of it as the United States,” he says. “Every gallery has its own state and each state runs itself the way it wants to.”

Another one of the “states” that shouldn’t be missed during the Thursday event is Spring Arts Tower, which houses a gallery, arts collective, bookstore and ad agency. Here, visitors can peruse the cross-disciplinary CB1 Gallery, studio/gallery retail shops like Robin McGeough’s Dove Biscuit Studios or Liz Huston’s Art and Curiosities, and the anchor of the tower: The Last Bookstore. As if you needed an added incentive to visit, fashion shows and poetry readings are not uncommon.



Stop by The Hive Gallery in Los Angeles during the city’s art walk to view pop surrealism illustrations.

NEW YORK CITY

Boasting hundreds of galleries across the five boroughs, New York City is arguably the art capital of the country. However, the city proper lacks a free monthly event. For a true art walk experience, hop on a ferry to Staten Island for Second Saturday, a grassroots operation that started in 2010.

Second Saturday takes place across the island’s north shore, with approximately 10 core venues (the number changes from month to month) and additional pop-up spaces. Artwork ranges from traditional, formalist expression to more transgressive, underground art. One of the staples of the walk, for instance, is Day de Dada, a spontaneous and experimental performance art group.

Melissa West, organizing director for Second Saturday, recommends visitors check out places that offer something unique to the event in addition to displaying artwork. “Stapleton has a super-cool Artist Market where visitors can buy local art after a brief and scenic walk from the Staten Island Railroad,” she says. “There’s also MakerSpace, which has workshops in all sorts of disciplines including sewing, welding and making electronic instruments.”

On Bay Street, one of the main stretches of the walk, Every Thing Goes Book Cafe offers fair trade snacks, teas and coffee, live performances and an array of used books and records. In Livingston, the Snug Harbor Cultural Center

& Botanical Garden is an 83-acre park-like campus housing several gallery spaces including Art Lab, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, the Staten Island Museum and the Noble Maritime Collection. Around the corner, the Creative Photographers’ Guild Gallery hosts monthly photography installations. On the return trip back to the city, make one last stop at the Staten Island Arts’ Culture Lounge, a gallery and market located in the St. George ferry terminal.

NEW YORK CITY: IF YOU GO

To get to Second Saturday, take the 1 or R train to South Ferry, then board the free ferry to St. George. From there, you are in walking distance of the participating galleries and venues. Walking and biking are encouraged to reach other stops along the way such as Honor Wines, Adobe Blues and 120 Bay Cafe for refreshments.

JOSEPH PENTANGELO



ThingNY performs at Art Lab as part of Second Saturday on Staten Island.



Take the ferry to get to Staten Island.



The Wynwood Walls, on Northwest Second Avenue between 25th and 26th streets, feature murals by famed street artists.



Gallery Diet is a must-see during Second Saturday Art Walk in Miami.

MIAMI: IF YOU GO

There are several impressive eateries within the Wynwood area. You can't go wrong at any of the restaurants and bars, but a couple of stand-outs are Wynwood Kitchen & Bar, an indoor-outdoor space surrounded by contemporary urban art, and Joey's Italian Cafe, which serves traditional pizzas and pastas using sustainable ingredients.

MIAMI

Thanks to the popularity of Art Basel over the past decade and the renaissance of all things creative throughout the city, Miami has easily become the spot to view, discuss and enjoy modern and contemporary fine art. On Second Saturday Art Walk, roughly 60 galleries in the Wynwood Arts District throw open their doors for the inevitable droves from 6-10 p.m.

"The vibe is overwhelmingly positive," says Patrick Walsh, executive director of the Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA). "There's always an element of surprise since there are new gallery

openings, installations and productions each month—not to mention all the new businesses opening in the neighborhood."

For the most part, Wynwood galleries exhibit a range of works from pieces by local emerging artists to well-established blue chip collections. The street art represents talent from around the world and changes regularly, most drastically each year before and during Art Basel, the first week of December. The Wynwood Walls, abandoned warehouses on Northwest Second Avenue between 25th and 26th streets, has featured the work of more than 50 artists from 16 countries since its inception in 2009 to transform the district.

Given the sheer number of galleries and innovative spaces in this area's art walk, it's a good idea to plan ahead when participating in Second Saturday. Walsh's personal favorites include Gallery Diet, Gregg Shienbaum Fine Art and Robert Fontaine Gallery. Other must-sees are The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse and the Rubell Family Collection, which both feature contemporary art.

CHICAGO

Spanning several contiguous blocks, the Chicago Arts District is somewhat of a newbie in the national art scene. The district was established in 2002 by the third generation of the Podmajersky family, which first settled in the East Pilsen neighborhood in 1914 and ran a successful dairy before buying up property that housed and employed many immigrants.

In the 1950s, John Podmajersky Jr. and his wife helped revitalize the community by converting dilapidated buildings into artists' lofts centered around urban gardens made from reclaimed alleyways. Then, around 13 years ago, John Podmajersky III formed the district to further boost the economy and create an arts destination. Centered around South Halsted and West 18th streets, Second Fridays now showcases 30-plus creative spaces in a posh nucleus of galleries, lofts and studios from 6-10 p.m.

This particular walk provides an up-close look at the artwork. Open houses allow the public to mingle in the intimacy of the artists' own studios and homes, while organized



CHICAGO: IF YOU GO

Chocolate fans shouldn't leave without a stop at Choclat Uzma Sharif. Meanwhile, book lovers will appreciate Open Books, an indie bookstore that moonlights as "a nonprofit social venture" that also provides literacy experiences for children throughout Chicago. At dinnertime, check out establishments such as Nightwood and Del Toro.

discussions are both educational and enlightening, often offering an inside glimpse of the inspiration and creative process behind the artists' pieces.

Sandra Zhong, marketing and administrative assistant for the Chicago Arts District, suggests guests streamline their experience by starting at the information center,

where friendly staff members hand out maps and answer questions to help visitors navigate through the self-guided art walk. Community favorites include Bryan Sperry Studio, Artpentry, Studio Oh! and NYCH Gallery.

"There are no limitations to what visitors may see in the Chicago Arts



COURTESY OF INSIGHT GALLERY

InSight Gallery is among 14 galleries in Fredericksburg, Texas, that participate in First Friday Art Walk.

District," Zhong says. "In our community, we have artists that specialize in installations, paintings, sculptures, photography, mixed media, performing arts and much, much more."

AUSTIN, TEXAS

While many young Austinites gather for the raucous block party of First Thursday on South Congress Avenue (predominantly arts and crafts), fine art lovers know to head to Fredericksburg. A little over an hour outside Austin city limits, Fredericksburg has garnered a reputation for producing the best wine and fine art galleries in the region.

First Friday Art Walk consists of 14 galleries open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., the majority of which are located on Main Street between Orange and Washington streets. With each gallery serving local food and vino from nearby award-winning

wineries Becker Vineyards, Grape Creek Vineyards and Torre de Pietra, Fredericksburg offers something that most art walks do not: a full day of visual and physical sustenance.

"A stroll through the streets of our very Norman Rockwell-esque town is always beautiful, and art walk evenings are no different," says Elizabeth Harris, gallery associate and special events coordinator at InSight Gallery. "Drifts of live music and conversations pour out of gallery doors up and down Main Street until at least 8 p.m., but often later, as the doors are open until the last patron leaves."

Long referred to as an antiques town with strong German heritage, Fredericksburg has only recently established itself as a hotbed of fine art. With roughly 1.5 million visitors each year, "this little jewel of a town," as Harris calls it, is definitely putting itself on the map. **C**



Galleries like NYCH Gallery (top left) stay open late during Chicago's art walk.



COURTESY OF INSIGHT GALLERY

Paintings abound at InSight Gallery.

AUSTIN, TEXAS: IF YOU GO

Situated in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, Fredericksburg is just a one-hour drive from Austin. Unparalleled cuisine and Texas wines are on the menu at Cabernet Grill. Farm Haus Bistro also offers ever-changing dishes served in a dining room that overlooks the property's gardens.



Cesare Casella, executive chef and partner at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto in New York

The Culinary Cure

Prosciutto stars in simple, savory and sweet dishes at popular restaurants across the country.

BY TIFFANIE WEN

When it comes to gastronomy, Italy has contributed much to the epicurean landscape, most notably pasta, gelato and cheese. Luckily for charcuterie fans, the region's cured meats—especially prosciutto—are stealing the spotlight in the United States. Imports of this specialty item are at an all-time high; rare types

(like those from Tuscany) are available stateside for the first time due to new Food and Drug Administration approvals; and the ingredient is innovatively incorporated into restaurant dishes.

Prosciutto (which translates simply to ham in Italian), or, more correctly, “prosciutto crudo” (the preserved, uncooked type we usually think of), is a protected designation

in Italy, similar to appellations of wine. Largely produced in the central and northern regions, the ham—which is the hind leg or thigh meat—is hand-rubbed with salt and sometimes herbs or chili for a rustic taste, then rinsed and hung to dry in a cool, well-ventilated space for more than a year during the curing process. One of the most popular and well-known types, prosciutto di Parma,

which comes from the same region as Parmesan cheese, can take up to three years to make. By the time the drying process is complete, the ham has lost more than a quarter of its weight in moisture, which concentrates the flavor in the meat.

According to Fabrizio Concordati, sommelier and in-house prosciutto expert at the Boccondivino restaurant in Milan,



COURTESY OF HOG & ROCKS

Cured meat is featured heavily on the menu at Hog & Rocks in San Francisco.

curing pork in Italy originated as far back as the Roman times. A surgery school that was located in a town called Alta Val Nerina in central Italy, with close proximity to the pigs raised for the cured ham, helped establish the practice of slicing it very thin.

Of course, other countries have become experts of its production, including Spain, France and the United States. At Coalfire Pizza in Chicago, owner Dave Bonomi sources everything domestically, including La Quercia prosciutto from Iowa. "Some people say Parma is more buttery," he says. "But La Quercia is arguably the best prosciutto made in the United States, and I think it's better than what you can get in Naples. You don't have to go to Europe to get the ingredient necessarily."

Perhaps being less purist about the delicacy is also the reason American chefs are able to be so innovative, cooking it in ways that Italians might be hesitant to. "In Italy, you can incorporate prosciutto everywhere in your dinner," Concordati says. "As an appetizer, we eat it plainly sliced or on bread. ... As a main course, we eat it in pasta like stuffed tortellini, and on

pizza, and there's even a chef making prosciutto ice cream here. In the United States, chefs are using it with vegetables, protein and even more so with sweets. ... Probably because they know that a good prosciutto will improve any dish."

TO START

As an appetizer, it's difficult to think of anything that will get mouths watering better than a thinly sliced, salty piece of meat. Restaurants are no stranger to the concept, and offer everything from classic charcuterie boards to innovative starters like stuffed rolls, as well as fruit, vegetables and seafood wrapped in thin slices.

Some chefs are capitalizing on the emerging trend and are devoted almost exclusively to cured meat, like Hog & Rocks in the Mission District of San Francisco, which serves various hams and oysters alongside expertly made cocktails. Owner and Executive Chef Scott Youkilis recommends pairing it with Lambrusco wine and other high-acid, lighter-bodied reds. "Traditionally, it's perfect for prosciutto and other cured meats," he says.

At Vintage Enoteca in Los Angeles, the wrapped Medjool dates



COURTESY OF VINTAGE ENOTECA

Prosciutto-wrapped Medjool dates at Vintage Enoteca in Los Angeles

are one of the most popular items on the menu. The fruit is packed with a mix of Fresno pepper and manchego and goat cheeses before being swathed in meaty layers then baked. "For prosciutto lovers, it's the combination of salty and sweet that's appealing in the dish," says co-owner Jennifer Moore. "When it's cooked, the two flavors highlight each other and balance each other, while the pepper gives it a little bit of a kick." She says that lately customers prefer to start their meal with a decadent

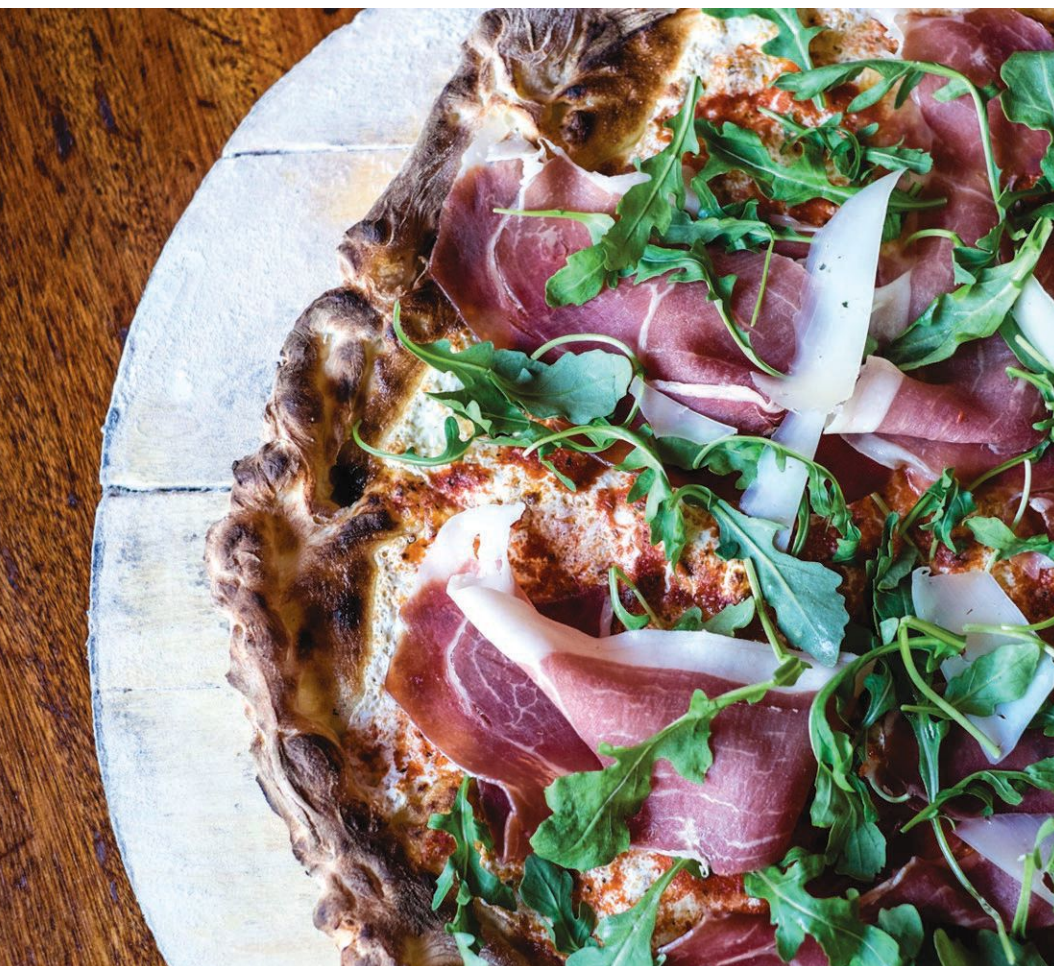
dish and seem to be drawn to cultural foods more than ever before.

The ham is also served raw, or sometimes fried, as a topping on soups and salads. Cesare Casella, executive chef and partner at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto in New York, says an easy way to incorporate it into starter dishes like a salad is by crisping the meat and crumbling it into small pieces instead of using bacon bits for a salty crunch. Casella's soups also experiment with the meat: The carbonara comes with an organic



TINY URBAN KITCHEN

Brussels sprouts with pancetta and prosciutto at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto



Prosciutto is incorporated into entrees like pizza at Coalfire Pizza in Chicago (left), pasta all'Amatriciana at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto (top right) and breakfast paninis at Vintage Enoteca (bottom right).



Zen Sai at the Essex House Hotel in Miami specializes in Asian fusion foods, including a prosciutto roll with goat cheese, shiitake mushrooms, asparagus and bell peppers wrapped in thin slices of the cured meat.

egg poached in a chicken Grana Padano broth, served with croutons, chives and a prosciutto chip.

TO SAVOR

Though Italians will tell you they could easily eat prosciutto as is for an entire meal, in the United States, it is part of the ingredient list for a plethora of main dishes, including pasta, pizza, other meats and seafood, and in breakfast items in lieu of smoked salmon.

In Miami, it's prepared with a Japanese twist. At Zen Sai, an Asian fusion restaurant in the Essex House Hotel, the prosciutto roll has been on the menu since the opening in July 2012. According to Executive Chef Chris Wong, seasoned sushi rice is spread on seaweed, then layered with goat cheese, crispy shiitake mushrooms, asparagus and thin-sliced bell peppers. The ingredients are rolled

together, wrapped with sliced prosciutto, topped with caviar and plated with a garnish of white truffle oil and balsamic vinegar glaze. Combining prosciutto and truffle pays homage to the pigs who help find this treasured fungi in the wild. "It's a pork-truffle love story," Wong says.

While some chefs are creative in their usage, it's more commonly served raw on pizza or added to pasta toward the end of cooking so the flavor isn't drastically altered. At Coalfire Pizza, the prosciutto combo was so popular that Bonomi took it off the menu. Now it's offered as an extra topping that customers can add, which they do in droves. Thinly sliced pieces are piled high after the pizza is baked, keeping the ingredient raw.

"We never cook it; if you talk to my relatives, they'll tell you it's a sin to cook prosciutto. It's a delicate and



Prosciutto ice cream at Humphry Slocombe in San Francisco

beautiful meat just the way it is,” Bonomi explains, adding that he’s also excited that chefs are using the ingredient in new ways. “I like that people cook it. It’s become fashionable in the last year, and chefs know how to use it. It’s also a great way to get a bacon-like flavor without the smoke.”

Prosciutto is also finding its way into morning meals. Vintage Enoteca incorporates it with eggs in paninis, or as an alternative to smoked salmon on eggs Benedict. Casella goes one step further with his prosciutto puff, which is essentially a beignet with the meat stuffed inside that can be eaten on its own or used as the basis for a sandwich.

Casella also uses it in his all’Amatriciana sauce and Brussels sprouts recipe. “For me, it’s the complex flavor of prosciutto that can make a dish so much better,” Casella says, noting that he also appreciates its

raw texture. “But if you use it too much, it can hurt your dish.”

TO DELIGHT

It’s common to find the cured meat as an accompaniment in many dishes, but perhaps nothing is as surprising as the desserts with this savory addition. People have been covering melon with the ham for years—a combination that has found its way into the bottom of cocktails—but several new treats are emerging on the after-dinner scene.

Humphry Slocombe is one of the few places in the country that offers it as an ice cream flavor. According to co-owner Sean Vahey, the idea came about when celebrity chef Chris Cosentino brought in prosciutto bones and asked if the company was interested in trying it out. “Initially, the perception was most likely that we were trying

prosciutto-flavored ice cream for the sake of being weird until people tried it,” Vahey says, adding that the meat’s versatility is one reason for its increased popularity. “[However,] once people tried it, they realized that it made sense and is delicious.” Others certainly agree—lines for his ice cream in San Francisco can stretch for what seem like miles.

Casella is another chef who uses it on the dessert menu, with his brittle that is part of the semifreddo selection, served with a parfait and fruit. The meat is sautéed until crispy, then added to caramelized sugar for a tantalizing taste. Regardless of how much prosciutto is loved, it’s important not to overdo it, especially when it comes to dessert. Casella suggests the best way to use it is by capitalizing on its aroma, like a perfume. And what a pleasant perfume it is. **C**

Passion for Prosciutto

To taste some standout dishes incorporating this popular cured ham, discover the following eateries on the must-visit list.

Humphry Slocombe, San Francisco

This famous ice cream shop offers an array of inventive flavors—from ancho chocolate to foie gras and even prosciutto—to indulge brave and curious dessert seekers. (humphryslocombe.com)

Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto, New York

At this salumeria, crispy prosciutto is combined with caramelized sugar to form brittle, which is part of the semifreddo dessert that includes a Parmigiano-Reggiano parfait and seasonal fruit. (salumeriarosi.com)

Vintage Enoteca, Los Angeles

This wine bar serves Italian-inspired small plates including a salty-sweet combination of dates stuffed with Fresno pepper, and manchego and goat cheeses, all held together by layers of the cured meat. (vintageenoteca.com)

Zen Sai, Miami Beach

Located in the Essex House Hotel, Zen Sai offers sharing plates of Asian fusion cuisine, including the prosciutto roll, which incorporates goat cheese, mushrooms, asparagus and bell peppers, all wrapped up in the specialty meat, topped with caviar and garnished with truffle oil and balsamic vinegar. (zensaisobe.com)

Destination Shopping

Luxury malls and boutique-filled avenues abound from coast to coast, creating a sartorial experience for any traveler.

BY HEATHER FISH

When traveling to a new place, part of the thrill is finding a special something to bring home. And with world-renowned malls and fashion districts in many of the country's top cities, shopping becomes a must-do part of the itinerary. From major retailers and high-end luxury brands to clever vintage boutiques, there's something for everyone. Add a distinctive setting that captivates the senses with inspired cuisine at restaurants tucked among the shops and attractions worth more than a passing glance, and you have all the elements that come together to create a perfect destination.

ADAM LERNER



Some of the world's most high-end boutiques can be found along Madison Avenue in New York City.



Brooks
Brothers



EAST COAST ALLURE

The intrigue of shopping Manhattan's Upper East Side is not only due to a long, rich history of the finest luxury fashion houses found there—like Prada at 70th Street and Christian Louboutin between 75th and 76th streets—but also its distinct air of elegance.

Madison Avenue, which takes its moniker from Madison Square (named after former President James Madison), is the foremost shopping destination for any fashionable lady or gentleman while in New York. One of the oldest American brands found on Madison Avenue is Brooks Brothers. Approaching its 200th anniversary, the company is known for its loyal customers, which include U.S. presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Barack Obama.

Today, the flagship store at 44th Street and Madison Avenue appeals to the Wall Street elite and those of Ivy League pedigree. "People that come to Madison Avenue to shop are 'dressed to the nines,' but it's not just for the elite blue bloods anymore as it was in the early days," says Tom Davis, a salesman who started with the company 47 years ago and was responsible for selling John F. Kennedy Jr. his first prep school uniform. He adds that many people come to the Upper East Side to watch for trends in fashion, and he also admits to being a fan of people watching on the avenue.

Just a short walk away is Fifth Avenue, where the sole Bergdorf Goodman department store is found. Housed between 57th and 58th streets, Bergdorf provides an impressive shopping and dining experience. Through its doors are fashion's finest runway looks, paired with impeccable service to ensure fit and satisfaction. Meanwhile, BG Restaurant—on Bergdorf's seventh floor—is convenient for the famished shopper, but doesn't lack in sophistication or culinary expertise. With sweeping views of Central Park, it's a popular lunch or early dinner destination.

NEW YORK CITY: Flagship Shopping

Fabergé's New York flagship boutique is a treasure chest of intricate pieces of jewelry, including the new Fabergé Charms collection. Miniature versions of the egg pendants can be affixed to a chain bracelet. (694 Madison Ave.; 646-559-8848; faberge.com)



Chicago's Magnificent Mile boasts more than 400 shops.

A MIDWEST MILE

A stretch of road in Chicago dedicated to fashion fanfare, premier wine and food from around the world is best known as the Magnificent Mile, transformed from an American Indian trading post in the early 1900s and inspired by the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Running along North Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street (the district covers a square mile), there are approximately 460 stores, 275 restaurants and 60 hotels—enough to accommodate any traveler's shopping and entertainment desires.

The diversity found along the street is incomparable. Chicago's conservative elite appreciate the custom-fitted suits made of fine European fabrics from the likes of J. Toor. Other favorites include a vast selection of brands with worldly origins, such as New Zealand's Icebreaker Merino, Munich's OSKA, England's Barbour and Topshop, and Cop. Copine of Paris—all with wares reflecting their country's typical motif. The Magnificent Mile is also home to the popular classics Burberry, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.



CHICAGO: Flagship Shopping

Burberry's store on the Magnificent Mile boasts five floors of retail space, filled with exclusive collections as well as classic pieces like the iconic trenchcoat. The facade features the brand's signature tartan pattern; inside, digital walls display live events and fashion shows. (633 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-787-2500; burberry.com)



Miami's open-air Bal Harbour Shops

MIAMI HEAT

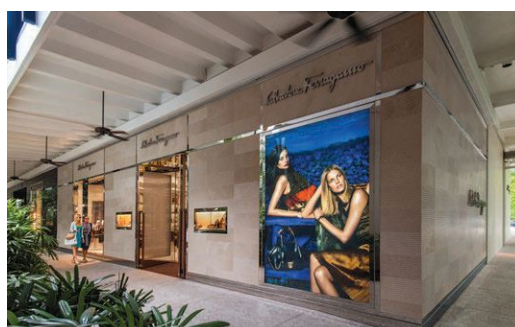
Just a stone's throw from Miami's sultry shores, the 50-year-old, open-air Bal Harbour Shops provides a welcome alternative to quintessential beach activities like sunbathing. Known for its lush landscaping with koi ponds surrounded by exotic tropical greenery, the luxury mall maintains a sense of serenity amid the fashion fury.

Built on former World War II barracks, the development quickly became an exclusive shopping center thanks to owner Stanley Whitman. He successfully persuaded Neiman Marcus to choose Bal Harbour for its first department store outside of Texas, and attracted boutiques previously only found in Paris or New York City.

The first to boast Chanel and Saint Laurent's latest U.S. concept stores, and a stunning newly designed two-story Ferragamo flagship, Bal Harbour is also known for its selection of the finest boutiques for fashion trailblazers and smart shoppers seeking the next big trend. For instance, Bal Harbour's Charlotte Olympia boutique, one of only three in the U.S., carries the full collection of Kitty & Co. flats. The coveted shoes by designer Charlotte Olympia make the shop one of the most popular shopping destinations in Miami. Patterned after a chic velvet slipper, these stylish yet comfortable shoes are embroidered with a different cat personality that gives them a distinct and clever look.

MIAMI: Flagship Shopping

Vilebrequin has opened its global flagship store at Bal Harbour Shops, offering swimsuits in vibrant prints and ready-to-wear pieces for men, women and children. (9700 Collins Ave.; 305-861-4022; vilebrequin.com)





South Coast Plaza in Orange County, Calif., attracts millions of shoppers annually.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHARM

Located in the heart of sunny Orange County, Calif., is South Coast Plaza. The high-end mall houses more than 250 luxury brands—including favorite fashion brands ranging from Chloe and Prada to Valentino, as well as the only West Coast Assouline, which offers a selection of sophisticated coffee table books. Also reflecting a high level of prestige, the mall features nearly 30 exclusive jewelry and timepiece shops such as Jaeger-LeCoultre, IWC Schaffhausen, Chopard and Cartier, an unprecedented lineup under one roof.

Shoppers who work up an appetite will find that South Coast Plaza has restaurants as remarkable as its upscale boutiques. The famed AnQi by House of An features a gourmet bistro, noodle bar and thick glass catwalk running through the dining room for the many fashion shows hosted there throughout the year.

Catering to more than 22 million diverse visitors per year, the mall is known for taking guest service to a whole new level, from foreign language assistance and currency exchange to a shuttle that transports guests to and from surrounding hotels. Additionally, the private, invitation-only Access suite accommodates shoppers with separate rooms for relaxing in between purchases. A carousel and oversized bright-colored balloons ensure that young visitors will be able to experience memorable moments. All of this combines for a personal touch that allows shoppers to feel like cherished guests.

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF.: Flagship Shopping

World-famous watch manufacturer Rolex sells its exquisite timepieces at its U.S. flagship location at South Coast Plaza. Knowledgeable employees are on hand to walk customers through the features of the Swiss-made models. (3333 Bristol St.; 714-241-8088; rolex.com)



Melrose Avenue brings together exclusive brands and vintage shops in Los Angeles.



LA LIVING

Many people often wonder where movie and television stars shop for their chic clothes. The answer is usually along Los Angeles' Melrose Avenue, where celebrities can be spotted flitting in and out of their favorite boutiques.

With an eclectic mix of current fashion, rare vintage finds and punk rock-inspired attire, the typical Melrose shopper is a trendy youngster in search of a look recently worn on TV. Rarely disappointed with high-end offerings like Marc Jacobs and Alexander McQueen located west of Fairfax Avenue, shoppers then venture east for more daring designs at Joyrich, which carries cool 1980s graphic tees, or Posers, known for stocking every style of Dr. Martens combat boots imaginable. Stores like these make it easy to understand why shoppers travel hundreds—or even thousands—of miles to visit the Melrose boutiques.

Vintage lovers will also be pleased on Melrose: Decades, specializing in designer couture from the past, is one of the best places to find these yesteryear looks. Owners Cameron Silver and Christos Garkinos pride themselves on having created a retail haven enjoyed by celebrities and fashionistas from all over the world, including Charlize Theron and Selma Blair. "Back in the '80s and early '90s, the east part of Melrose was the place to shop for unique fashion," says Garkinos, a former star of Bravo TV's "Dukes of Melrose" series based on his store. "... The show 'Melrose Place' cemented its pop culture lore." **C**

LOS ANGELES: Flagship Shopping

The Southern California flagship of rag & bone has loyal fans who stop by for its chic creations. The two-story space sells both men's and women's apparel and accessories. (8533 Melrose Ave.; 424-245-4816; rag-bone.com)



New York's Belmont Stakes, on June 6 this year, is the longest test of speed and endurance for horses.



Jewels of the **TRIPLE CROWN**

Enjoy the excitement and must-see festivities of the three most prestigious horse races this season.

BY VICKI HOGUE-DAVIES

Last spring, a chestnut colt named California Chrome caught the world's attention in a quest to become the 12th horse in history to win the esteemed Triple Crown, a group of the sport's most important events and its most sought-after prize. After galloping to victory in the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes, he tied for fourth in the Belmont Stakes and another year passed without a horse claiming all three jewels in the crown. This year, the excitement begins again May 2, when the Kentucky Derby kicks off the racing series for 3-year-old thoroughbreds. The Derby will be followed by the Preakness Stakes on May 16 and the Belmont Stakes on June 6.

The last horse to win the Triple Crown was Affirmed, when he beat his nemesis Alydar by a nose in the Belmont in 1978. Sir Barton was the first horse to win it, in 1919. It is the dream of every thoroughbred horse owner and trainer to take the coveted title, and while that possibility greatly fuels the popularity of the races, each individual race claims its own majesty and excitement, whether there is a Triple Crown contender in the mix or not.

But long before post time for each race, the celebrations begin. Socialites consider the best places to see and be seen. The fashion-conscious bring out their fanciest hats, a staple at the races, and their best spring clothes. Cocktail recipes are perfected in anticipation of race parties. And it all kicks off with the countdown to the Kentucky Derby.

RUNNING FOR THE ROSES

The most famous race in the crown, the 1.25-mile Kentucky Derby, is run at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., the first Saturday in May each year. Its nicknames include the "greatest two minutes in sports" and the "run for the roses," an allusion to the traditional garland of red roses that is placed across the winning horse's back. There are numerous other customs that surround the race; one of the more notable is for attendees to sip on mint juleps. More than 120,000 of the bourbon-based cocktails are enjoyed at Churchill Downs during the two-day race celebration, which includes the running of the popular Kentucky Oaks the day before the Derby.

Another standard event outside the race is the Kentucky Derby Festival, which



Kentucky Derby mint juleps

JULIE WADDER

CHERYL ANN QUIGLEY



JESSICA KRISH

The Kentucky Derby takes place at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky.



COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

Preakness Stakes (pictured above and below)



The Black-Eyed Susan is the official drink of the Preakness Stakes.



The Taste of Derby presents wine and gourmet cuisine on April 30.



Jockeys sign autographs during Preakness Stakes festivities.

attracts more than 1.5 million people annually. This year, the festival runs from April 18 through May 1.

"The Kentucky Derby Festival is the community-side, civic celebration of the Kentucky Derby," says Mike Berry, president and CEO of the nonprofit Kentucky Derby Festival. "It is really the opportunity for locals to come out and celebrate springtime in Kentucky. From its opening event, Thunder over Louisville, to the final event, the Republic Bank Pegasus Parade—held the Thursday before Derby—we have taken a two-minute race and turned it into a two-week-long celebration."

Thunder Over Louisville, the festival's most popular attraction, features an air show and one of the country's largest fireworks displays. Last year during the show, audiences witnessed the Blue Angels performing their incredible aerial acrobatics. Meanwhile, the Pegasus Parade takes place April 30 in the heart of the city, showcasing equestrian units, bands and floats.

Marking its 60th anniversary this year, the parade will impress guests with a Best of Louisville theme.

Some of the festival's other activities include a marathon, wine and beer tastings, a farm-to-table dinner and Celebrity Day at the Downs on the track's Millionaire's Row—which turns out fairly large crowds. "Access to Churchill Downs is not always easy during Derby week," Berry says. "Not only does the day give access to the track during a very busy time, but it also features celebrities who are in town for festival events."

Separate from the festival, visitors also may mingle with horse racing's celebrities at the Taste of Derby presented April 30 by Stella Artois, with fine wines and gourmet cuisine at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

A CELEBRATION OF BLACK-EYED SUSANS

Like the Derby, Baltimore's Preakness Stakes, which is celebrating its 140th

anniversary this year, boasts its own special flower, the black-eyed Susan. Approximately 120,000 people will be on hand at Pimlico Race Course on the third Saturday in May to share in the excitement as one horse from the field of racing's best young thoroughbreds enters the winner's circle to have the wreath made of Maryland's state flower placed around its neck. Also named after the flower, the official drink of the race (made with a blend of vodka and three juices) is served at dining establishments throughout Charm City, adding further spirit to the race celebrations.

"The whole city is buzzing on race day," says Tom Noonan, president and CEO of Visit Baltimore. "The race is the city's longest-running and most iconic tourism event. All the restaurants are doing really well. Everybody has their hats on, and it's a big fashion moment for the city. You have people looking for that special tie they want to wear

and bringing out the summer suits. Women are bringing out their best dresses and hats. It is one of those big Baltimore showy times of year."

Some must-see events in the week leading up to race day include the Sunrise at Old Hilltop tour, featuring an inside look at the Preakness Stakes barn and the opportunity to watch Preakness contenders during their morning workouts. On Friday before the Preakness, a pinnacle happening is Black-Eyed Susan Day at Pimlico, a full day of racing culminating with the Black-Eyed Susan, a stakes race for fillies (young female horses) that has been run since 1919. The day also includes concerts, celebrity jockey autograph signings and events related to women's issues and health—last year featured the Susan G. Komen foundation to raise awareness and support research to end breast cancer.

On race day, watch the action from the four-star Terrace Dining Room or other premium seating choices, such

THE TASTE OF DERBY PHOTO BY KIRBY ADAMS; JOCKEY AUTOGRAPH AND BLACK-EYED SUSAN PHOTOS BY JIM MOULDER/MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB; PREAKNESS STAKES PHOTO (BOTTOM RIGHT) BY AARON HAUPTMAN

Off the Track

When not cheering at these top horse races or partaking in the associated festivities, there are plenty of ways to enjoy each city, including luxurious places to rest your head afterward.

Kentucky Derby

What to do: Visit the Kentucky Derby Museum, which attracts more than 200,000 annual visitors, to soak in years of racing history. Kentucky is also famous for its bourbon, and there are several distilleries in the area with tours and tastings including Jim Beam's American Stillhouse. (Kentucky Derby Museum: derbymuseum.org) (Jim Beam's American Stillhouse: americanstillhouse.com)

Where to stay: The official hotel of the Derby is the riverfront Galt House Hotel, a centrally located lodging with 1,300 guest rooms and multiple restaurants. Or, near the airport and minutes from Churchill Downs is the 588-room Crowne Plaza Louisville Hotel. (Galt House: galthouse.com) (Crowne Plaza Louisville: cplouisville.com)

The Preakness Stakes

What to do: While in Baltimore, spend some time exploring Inner Harbor attractions such as the Maryland Science Center and the National Aquarium. Literature buffs will enjoy the Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum where the famed author lived before moving to Richmond, Va. (Maryland Science Center: mdsci.org) (National Aquarium: aqua.org) (Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum: poeinbaltimore.org)

Where to stay: Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore has waterfront views and sumptuous dining at Michael Mina's Wit & Wisdom tavern. There's also Hotel Monaco Baltimore, which is located in a Beaux Arts building that was once a railroad headquarters. (Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore: fourseasons.com/baltimore) (Hotel Monaco Baltimore: monaco-baltimore.com)

The Belmont Stakes

What to do: Long Island boasts many natural outdoor wonders that are perfect for strolling in late spring, including Freeport Nautical Mile, which offers waterside dining and views of fishing boats returning with their latest catches, and Jones Beach State Park with its boardwalk. (Jones Beach State Park: nysparks.com)

Where to stay: The Garden City Hotel—which boasts an Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa—just minutes from Belmont Park, is a popular spot to stay when visiting for the race. A little farther away, but still only 7 miles from the track, is the Inn at Great Neck, a boutique luxury hotel with 85 rooms. (Garden City Hotel: gardencityhotel.com) (Inn at Great Neck: innatgreatneck.com)



Dressing up is part of the fun at the Belmont (left) and Preakness (right) races.

as the Turfside Terrace or Preakness Village. There are also on-field festivities at the Preakness InfieldFest where live music and activities take place prior to the race. Grammy Award winner Lorde headlined the event last year and previous performers have included the Counting Crows, Goo Goo Dolls and other well-known acts.

AN ENDURANCE TEST

First run in 1867, New York's Belmont Stakes is the oldest of the races. Each year, it takes place three weeks after the Preakness. At 1.5 miles, the race at Belmont Park in Elmont on Long Island also marks the longest test of speed and endurance for horses. Racing buffs may remember the great Secretariat, who in 1973 cemented his place in history at the Belmont by running

it in 2:24—a record that has never been broken—and taking the race by an incredible 31 horse lengths to win the Triple Crown. Secretariat's owner, like all other Belmont winners since 1926, received the August Belmont Memorial Cup, a solid silver trophy designed by Tiffany & Co. in 1897. Winning owners keep the trophy for one year, until the crowning of the race's next winner.

"[The Belmont Stakes] is an amazing race," says Kristen Matejka, director of marketing and communications for the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau and Sports Commission. "The number of people who come from all over the world to see a Triple Crown race is unprecedented in terms of Long Island; in 2014, we got about 120,000 people. They come from

Europe, Dubai, all over. Even when it is not a Triple Crown, people just love the excitement of it."

The merriment begins with Belmont Stakes Festival Week, which includes a parade through Elmont and a charity run. The night before the race, don't miss the Belmont Festival in Garden City, featuring live music, food and family-friendly activities. And throughout Long Island and New York's other boroughs, Belmont Stakes parties are happening at pubs, bars and restaurants leading up to as well as after the big race.

On race day, top entertainment at the track encourages a good time for

all attendees. Last year, LL Cool J, musicians from West Point military academy and a star from Broadway's "Wicked" performed. And as the horses headed for the post, Frank Sinatra Jr. crooned the lyrics to his father's classic "New York, New York."

To ensure a premium spot to watch the actual race, make reservations for coveted box seats and upscale dining at the Champagne Room or Turf & Field Club early. No matter where you sit, have the signature race drink, the Belmont Jewel, a combination of bourbon, lemonade and pomegranate juice, at the ready to toast the winner and a day of celebration. **C**



The 1.25-mile Kentucky Derby is called the "greatest two minutes in sports."

Cooking With **Fire**

Now with five top-rated restaurants across the United States, Scott Conant may very well be at the height of his career—just don't call him a celebrity chef.

BY TESS EYRICH

Scott Conant is taking a second to catch his breath. In preparation for the opening of his latest restaurant, Corsair, at Turnberry Isle Miami resort this past December, the 44-year-old chef has been consumed with last-minute details for the brand-new eatery—think media tours, interviews, and design and menu adjustments—and is only now able to see the benefits of his work filter through in the form of glowingly positive reviews.

But this isn't Conant's first time going through the manic roller coaster ride that is launching a new restaurant—far from it, in fact. His experience opening restaurants and revamping flailing ones dates back to the late 1990s, and he debuted the first piece of his Conant-owned empire, the award-winning Italian eatery Scarpetta, in 2008. Something of an overachiever (though he'll be quick to tell you otherwise), the chef also has written several cookbooks, appeared as a judge on multiple seasons of the Food Network's "Chopped," and is the father of two daughters. The concept of juggling it all, he admits, is still something of a work in progress, but if you know anything about Conant, it's that he's always up for a challenge.



Scott Conant on Food Network's "Chopped"

MAKING THE CUT

Born and raised in suburban Connecticut, Conant grew up in the kind of Italian family whose home life revolved around the dinner table. He took his first cooking class when he was 11, but didn't necessarily consider making a long-term career out of his hobby until years later when he was in high school. "I went to a vocational school, and we had to choose which classes we wanted to take," he says. "My first choice was plumbing, because plumbers made more money than cooks. It was the mid-1980s, and what exists now in the restaurant world didn't necessarily exist then; the opportunities just hadn't opened up."

A serendipitous twist of fate—the plumbing class filled up before Conant could join—forced him into the culinary track, and he hasn't looked back since. After finishing high school, he headed to New York to attend The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde





"Chopped" judges Scott Conant, Alex Guarnaschelli and Marcus Samuelsson



Spaghetti with tomato sauce at Scarpetta

Park, a move that he describes as "everything" in terms of its effect on his worldview and experience as a cook.

While there, he landed an internship at Manhattan hot spot San Domenico and, after graduating from the CIA, he decamped for Munich to cook at the legendary Hotel Bayerischer Hof for a year. "It was an interesting time because the [Berlin] Wall had just come down in 1989, and so a lot of foreigners were starting to feed into West Germany [from the east] and throughout Europe," he says of the experience overseas. "At the same time, it was like a time capsule—no changes in infrastructure."

Upon returning to New York, Conant logged time at a variety of ultrahip Italian eateries, from San Domenico (again) and Il Toscanaccio to Chianti and Barolo, where he was named executive chef at just 25 years old. It was at these restaurants that Conant refined his craft, developing a cooking style he characterizes as "sprezzatura," which loosely translates to nonchalance and connotes an ability to make the elegant look easy. "I have a pretty solid foundation

in Italian principle," he says. "But I think that's the goal with everything I do—easy, elegant, rustic food."

Within just a few years, that toned-down style would have the attention of a serious chunk of Manhattan. In 2002, Conant opened the James Beard Award-winning L'Impero, and later, a Northern Italian concept called Alto. Following these launches, he partnered with LDV Hospitality to form Scott Conant Management (now SC Ventures), and the firm launched its first project, Scarpetta, in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood in 2008, kicking off what would be a string of culinary home runs.

TAKING THE HEAT

Fueled by the full-blown success of the first Scarpetta, Conant opened a trio of additional outposts in Beverly Hills, Las Vegas and Miami. He formally ended his relationship with the New York branch in 2014, but maintains close ties with the remaining three along with his Las Vegas wine bar, D.O.C.G. Enoteca, the aforementioned Corsair in Miami, and the SC Culinary Suite in Manhattan, which serves as an

event venue, test kitchen and his company's corporate headquarters.

He has filled the gaps between restaurant openings by penning three Italian cookbooks, releasing his own line of cookware, and joining the cast of the Food Network's "Chopped," on which he famously delivered a tirade against the overuse of raw onions and is remembered as one of the show's most polarizing judges. Still, he refuses to refer to himself as a "celebrity chef," instead reserving that title for icons like Wolfgang Puck, Daniel Boulud and Eric Ripert.

Despite his many triumphs, Conant will be the first to admit that the road to professional acclaim has been far from easy; if anything, he says, life has become more difficult as he has gotten older. "Success is one of those crazy things where people think it all becomes easy at a certain point, but I would have to say that probably nothing is easy," he says. "When you have expectations of yourself and people have expectations of your craft, it's a constant challenge. ... Back then [when I was younger,] I was working for a paycheck, just to pay my rent and

gain experience—hopeful and hungry and ambitious and all of that stuff." And while he still considers himself all of those things, he also acknowledges the fact that his roles, both in the kitchen and at home, have changed.

Becoming a husband and a father, in particular, have had a profound effect on him, and the never-ending balancing act is something he's always trying to improve upon. "After a lot of therapy sessions, I can definitely say that I love my family more than anything, and I would do anything to keep that intact and happy, but I also think that being entrepreneurial is an inherently selfish approach to life," he muses. "I want to spend time with my family, but I also need to do the work that I'm doing. ... Thankfully, my wife knows that."

LETTING IT SIMMER

Nowadays, Conant remains entirely focused on expanding his brand. At the end of last year, he announced his plan to return to Manhattan in 2015 with a new concept, simply called Conant. Though he's hesitant to elaborate on specifics, he expects, as

always, to be heavily involved in the restaurant's design (everything from decor to lighting) as well as its menu and service style.

He confesses to feeling constantly in a state of competition to be and do better, but explains that it's more of an inner struggle than a battle against his fellow chefs. "It's about staying relevant," he says, adding that his version of relevancy is rooted in things like flavor development and creating a sustainable vision for his cooking. Likewise, he's open about taking little satisfaction in his successes, noting that his main source of pride came from having his father, who passed away last year, be able to see some of what he has been working toward for years.

Perhaps because of this unbridled ambition, he finds little time for hobbies, instead preferring to spend his downtime looking at other restaurants' menus and pictures of food online. "I see these other chefs who are in bands or they play the guitar, and I see all of these restaurant people and they're singers or taking acting classes or traveling the world all the time, and I think, 'God,



Conant, who once planned to become a plumber, now has an empire of restaurants in major U.S. cities.

I wish I could do that,' he jokes. "I wish I was that interesting."

He does, however, consider traveling one of his few passions outside of cooking, and calls Tokyo one of the best food cities in the world. In fact,

it's the freedom to travel—to move on impulse, with abandon—that has become one of his greatest goals.

"I always say I'm working toward spontaneity," he explains. "I want to get to a point in my career where I

can be spontaneous, where I can say to my wife and kids, 'Let's jump on a plane and go to Paris for five days. Let's drive to the airport right now and go someplace.' There's something very freeing about that, right?" **C**

Three to Try

If you're in the mood for fresh, understated Italian food, one of these three Scott Conant restaurants should do the trick.



CORSAIR: The newest eatery in Conant's stable, Corsair at Turnberry Isle Miami resort is already earning rave reviews for its blend of Mediterranean and farmhouse-style cuisines. The design here is warm and sophisticated, combining beachy tiling with pops of gold and sage. Likewise, the menu spotlights classic surf-and-turf dishes like grilled snapper, lobster ravioli and porcini-braised veal, all made with locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. (turnberryislemiami.com)



D.O.C.G. ENOTECA: One of two Conant restaurants at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas hotel (the other being Scarpetta), D.O.C.G. Enoteca is the chef's urban take on a wine bar. The most casual of Conant's restaurants—with a modern yet rustic ambience—it features a menu of small plates such as roasted bone marrow and fried calamari, sandwiches and salads, pizzas and, of course, wines and traditional Italian aperitifs. (cosmopolitanlasvegas.com)



SCARPETTA LOS ANGELES: In true California style, the seasonally inspired food at Scarpetta at Montage Beverly Hills is best eaten on the restaurant's patio, which overlooks the gorgeous Beverly Canon Gardens. Come for knockout dishes like the spaghetti with tomatoes and basil, beef short ribs or pancetta-wrapped duck breast with chanterelle mushrooms. Private dining and tasting menus are also available for a bespoke experience. (montagehotels.com/beverlyhills)



20 Questions With **REBECCA TAYLOR**

BY KIRSTI CORREA

Thumb through the pages of Rebecca Taylor's latest lookbook for spring and you'll instantly desire every piece, each with a clear balance of femininity and modernity. The New Zealand-born fashion designer is always busy curating a new line of styles that all fashion aficionados will love—this May, she's launching her first-ever swim collaboration with the brand Giejo. The swimwear mimics the floral, leopard and vibrant prints found in the dresses and tops of her spring collection, which was inspired by the vintage Indian dresses her mother wore in the 1970s.

Shoppers can peruse her newest creations in boutiques in shopping destinations like Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta; her collections are also available at major departments stores, including Bloomingdale's, Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom. Get to know the woman behind your favorite soft chiffon dress, including quips about her love for clothes and other passions.

What was your first designer purchase?

A vintage Chanel jacket I bought in Paris

What is your favorite outfit to wear?

My Italian army pants and Victorian voile blouse

If you could only wear one color for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I love a pale pink on top; it suits my coloring.

What do you love about fashion?

Everything. I love how it's always evolving and I am constantly feeling inspired.

What do you dislike about fashion?

How it's always evolving

If you could change one thing about your career, what would it be?

Nothing, I really love everything I do.

If you weren't a fashion designer, what would you be?

A makeup artist, if my hands weren't so shaky

What is your most treasured possession?

My children

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Reading my favorite book on a beach, spending quality time with my family and working on a new collection in my studio

When were you the happiest?

There have been so many moments in my life I have felt happiest, but I would say one moment was when the Duchess of Cambridge wore my clothes.

What is your motto?

We are here for a good time, not a long time.

What is your greatest fear?

Spiders

What are your greatest achievements?

Being a mother and building the Rebecca Taylor business to where it is today

What do you still want to accomplish?

So much—there is not enough room to list it all.

What has been a career-defining moment?

When we had our first runway show, I remember having this feeling of having arrived.

Who are your favorite authors?

Jennifer Egan and Daphne Du Maurier

Who is your favorite artist?

Elizabeth Peyton

Where is your favorite vacation spot?

The Caribbean. I have never seen the water quite as beautiful as it is in the Caribbean.

Where is a place you've never been but would like to visit?

India

What is your current state of mind?

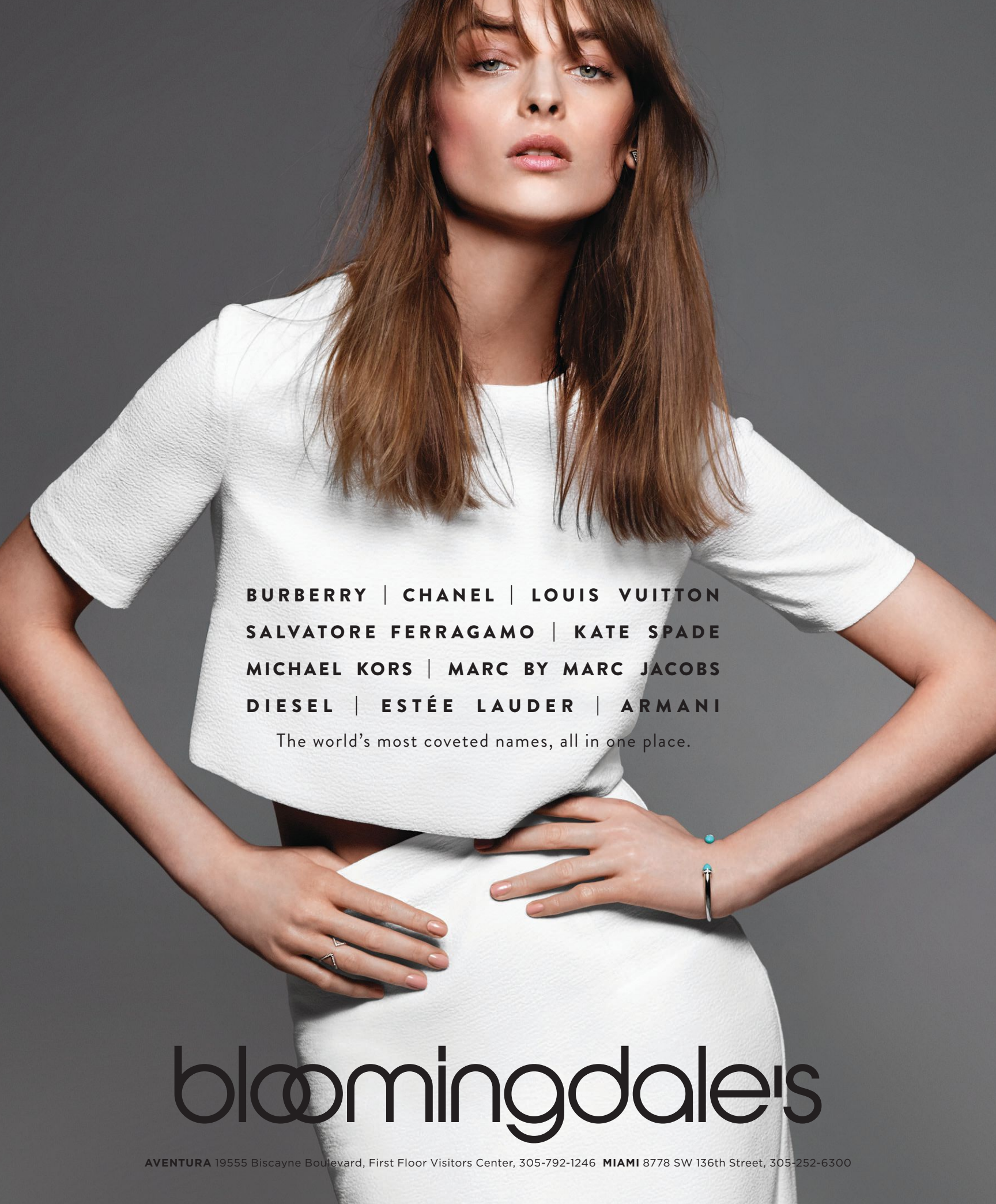
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