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Miami: To find bolder flavours and saner prices, stay off the beaten path

» In South Beach, Tongue & Cheek, for one, takes a nose-to-tail approach, but still offers something for your picky aunt.

Just a few blocks south, Sam Gorenstein is passionate about raw fish. "I just became obsessed with ceviche," he told me outside of his 240-square-foot take-out joint, My Ceviche.

Located next to a youth hostel, in a cramped space that does not allow for a refrigerator or freezer, Gorenstein relies on whatever his fish guy brings him each day. Best bet? Order a few ceviches and take them down to South Pointe Park for an impromptu picnic.

Your choice of seafood is cut to order, then bathed in a fresh citrus bath and tossed with thin, red onions, large wedges of cooked, soft sweet potato and tiny discs of yellow corn-on-the-cob.

Fresh seafood is also front and centre at the W South Beach, where New York's Andrew Carmellini presides over the Dutch, a younger sibling to the Greenwich Village original. Along with scallop *tridatto* and yellowtail crudo, the classic American menu boasts dry-aged steaks and insanely succulent pork chops. A few blocks away, uber-Spainard Jose Andres has an outpost of Bazaar in the swanky SLS Hotel; his modernist cuisine shines like a matador at high noon. But since both of these chef-branded restaurants exist in hotels, dinner for two could easily cost as much as your flight.

One benefit of staying at the Fontainebleau, at 44th and Collins, is its proximity to 41st Street and the causeway that shoots across the Intracoastal Waterway – away from the beach and over to Miami's Design District and Wynwood Arts District. For the price of a side of Chinese broccoli at Hakasan (\$18) our cab driver delivered us to a sea of reasonable prices, relative calm and killer coffee.

Start with lunch at Enriqueta's. This local favourite makes outstanding Cuban sandwiches, jammed with slices of ham and roasted pork, layered with bright



A nose-to-tail menu draws crowds to Tongue & Cheek in South Beach. DAVID E. DURBAK

yellow mustard and tart pickles, then pressed and heated like a panini. Get a frothy *batido* made with the tropical fruit mamey, and grab a guava-and-cheese-filled empanada for the road.

Stroll down to 2nd Avenue, through the heart of Wynwood, and check out some of the galleries while admiring the graffiti art along the way. Artists literally compete for the largest "canvas" they can find; every building is covered in bright murals. During the Art Basel Show in the late fall, the galleries buzz with constant activity. Stop at Panther Coffee for a bracing cold brew, or just an artful latte. The owner is a Portland, Ore., transplant who worked for the cultish Stumptown Coffee Roaster there.

For dinner, head to the Design

District. Tucked among the Jonathan Adlers and Pradas, chef Michael Schwartz's empire offers a trio of options. There's Harry's Pizzeria for wood-fired pies and great microbrews; a few blocks away, the Cypress Room, with its white-tablecloth American cookery elevating produce to new heights; and just up the street, Michael's Genuine Food & Drink – a fun and sophisticated restaurant cooking simply delicious food, ranging from snacks of mustardy deviled eggs and pucks of sweet-and-spicy pork belly to homemade pastas and whole-roasted fish and chicken. Be sure to save room for Hedy Goldsmith's crave-worthy desserts, including a cookie plate I'm still thinking about.

Not far north of Michael's, the Federal sits in a non-descript

strip mall, wedged between a Baskin-Robbins and a sushi joint. Inside, the decor includes old licence plates, wash basins and a giant, horizontal mirror surrounded by hunks of wood. It's cozy and comfortable and, on a Friday night, packed with locals. The food could best be described as American comfort with a twist. Like much of Miami, the husband-wife team is its own delicious mash-up of Colombian, Vietnamese and German. Crawfish tails swim in a creamy pool of grits while a slab of seared foie gras rests atop eggy brioche and bruléed bananas, drizzled in caramel sauce for what becomes either a sweet appetizer or a savoury dessert flambéed at your table.

On our final night, we head back to South Beach's Lincoln

Road, partly for the people-watching. Restaurant barkers beckon with their plates of linguine and strip steak, but we detour a half-block off the main drag and step into a den of northern Thai comfort food at Khong River House. Owned by the same group that has Yardbird a few blocks away (amazing fried chicken and biscuits), Khong serves a fiery, crunchy *som tom* (papaya salad) I would be proud to share with my friends from Bangkok, plus specialties such as funky fermented sausage and comforting Chiang Mai-style curry with noodles. Authentic, ethnic food among the German, French, Brazilian and Italian tourists? Welcome to the new Miami Beach.

Special to The Globe and Mail

THE SHORT LIST



The Federal:
Affordable wines, creative food with little pretense; a fun night out.
5132 Biscayne Blvd.,
305-758-9559,
thefederalmiami.com

Michael's Genuine Food & Drink:
Consistently delicious lunch or dinner in the Design District.
130 NE 40th St., 305-573-5555,
michaelsgenuine.com

Khong River House:
Surprisingly authentic Thai flavour combinations in the heart of tourist hot-spot Lincoln Road.
1661 Meridian Ave. 702-769-8177

chicken in a well-worn tourist section of South Beach; same owners as Khong River House.
1600 Lennox Ave., 305-538-5220,
runchickenrun.com

Tongue & Cheek:
A little something for everyone, from tourists to serious foodies; great cocktails. 431 Washington Ave., 305-704-2900,
tandcmiami.com

Bazaar by Jose Andres:
Over-the-top presentation in an over-the-top room, high-concept and high prices.
1701 Collins (at the SLS Hotel),
305-455-2999, thebazaar.com/
south-beach-the-bazaar

<div> <div>khongriver.com</div> </div>	
<div> <div>My Ceviche:</div> <div>To-go only, but you can dine at one of the tables in the adjacent youth hostel. 235 Washington Ave., 305-397-8710, myceviche.com</div> </div>	
<div> <div>The Dutch:</div> <div>Andrew Carmellini's creative take on American classics. 2201 Collins Ave. (at the W Hotel), 305-938-3111, thedutchmiami.com</div> </div>	
<div> <div>Michy's:</div> <div>Local celeb chef Michelle Bernstein's lone restaurant, north of the Design District. 6927 Biscayne Blvd., 305-759-2001, michysmiami.com</div> </div>	
<div> <div>Yardbird:</div> <div>Surprisingly authentic and delicious Southern classics like pimento cheese and fried</div> </div>	<div> <div>Enriqueta's Sandwich Shop:</div> <div>Sit among city workers and locals in a casual café where it's nearly impossible to spend more than \$10 or \$15 a person. 186 NE 29th St., 305-573-4681</div> </div>
	<div> <div>El Palacio de los Jugos:</div> <div>One of my all-time favourite Cuban restaurants is just south of Miami airport, so if you don't have a car, you might want to visit just before or after your flight. There are several locations; this is the original. 5721 W. Flagler, 305-262-0070, elpalaciodelosjugos.com</div> </div>
	<div> <div>Versailles:</div> <div>This is the legendary Little Havana restaurant; a Cuban landmark. 3555 SW 8th St., 305-444-0240, versaillesrestaurant.com</div> </div>
	<div>Steve Dolinsky</div>