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Florida Is for Foodies

Miami's fine-dining scene is enticing epicures from far and wide. BY PETER PROKO



Ocean Drive in South Beach

THE FIRST THOUGHT that crept into my mind as I collected my bags at Miami International Airport was that I had little in common with my fellow passengers—particularly the ones going gaga over the reality-TV star who'd been seated in first class. I wasn't here to get a celeb-worthy tan or shop high-end boutiques. As a foodie I had one mission in mind: to seek out the restaurants that make Miami more than just a playground for pretty people on holiday.

I stayed in South Beach at The Betsy Hotel, a grand and historic local landmark that recently underwent a very chic makeover. Here, the respected **BLT Steak** (1440 Ocean Dr., 305-673-0044; bltrestaurants.com) makes its home in Miami.

MIAMI SPICE

Here in Philly we have Restaurant Week a few times a year, but in Miami the fun lasts for two months. Seasonally, some of Miami's best restaurants offer three-course meals full of signature dishes as part of Miami Spice 2009. The \$35 meals are offered at more than 40 locations across town, and for an added value you can take advantage of the deal during lunch for \$22. The current promotion runs through the end of September. For more information or to find out about the next Miami Spice Month, visit lovemiamispice.com—*PH*.



Miami: Where to Stay

THE BETSY HOTEL | This recently renovated property, which housed troops during WW II, is rich in American history. The hotel features an expansive front porch perfect for people-watching and a library stocked with rare books. Suites feature dark-wood floors and cabinetry, Frette linens and plasma TVs. The Betsy's rooftop solarium is the perfect place to enjoy a spa treatment or a romantic sunset. For beachgoers, the hotel provides towels, chairs and umbrellas, but guests also have use of a private pool. And visitors won't go hungry thanks to chef Laurent Tourondel's on-site eatery, BLT Steak. (Don't worry about filling up at dinner; the hotel boasts a fully equipped fitness center on the first floor.) 1440 Ocean Dr., 305-531-6100; thebetsyhotel.com



The Betsy Hotel