

# TROPICAL LIFE

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## THE NEW KEY WEST

Thanks to some enterprising locals, there's more to the island's drinking scene than margaritas and mass-produced beers.

BY SHAYNE BENOWITZ  
Special to the Miami Herald

**T**here's a classic way of doing Key West. It involves dinner at Louie's Backyard, drinks and live music at Sloppy Joe's, photo ops at the Southernmost Buoy, a stop at the Hemingway House, spotting Key West chickens and sunset at Mallory Square. And, of course, plenty of Key lime pie, conch fritters and margaritas.

But a younger, hipper Key West is emerging, thanks to a few long-time locals turned entrepreneurs and restaurateurs who are shaping the culture of the island and swiftly solidifying new classics.

Chris Shultz, originally from Minneapolis, moved to Key West in 1999 after college in Boston and a stint in Los Angeles. In 2003, he co-authored the book *Quit Your Job & Move to Key West*. A cult classic still sold in gift shops today (now in its eighth edition), it's a comedic take on the magnetic draw of this bohemian, anything-goes island mixed with a dose of practical advice that's tempted many a daydreaming tourist.

• TURN TO KEY WEST, 6E



**LEADING THE CHARGE:** Chris Shultz, left, owner of The Porch, 2 Cents, The Other Side and Waterfront Brewery in Key West, holds a local chicken at The Porch's entrance. Below, the bar at 2 Cents.

LIVI LAVERY (SHULTZ) AND MICHAEL MARRERO (2 CENTS)



### A FORK ON THE ROAD

#### Caribbean food with an Asian influence at Ivan's Gastro

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**S**tarchy tubers and plantains known as "provisions" in the Caribbean are made use of at Ivan's Gastro in North Miami Beach, which is serving a mostly Carib menu with an Asian touch.

Open about two months, the place has an industrial look with poured-concrete flooring, high ceilings and exposed pipes, but there's a warm welcoming vibe with a bar where sake cocktails, beer and wine are available. For lunch there are sandwiches, burgers, pasta, and entrees such as ginger-garlic salmon, and chicken, shrimp or beef skewers over rice.

Chef Ivan Dorvil was born in Cap-Haitien, on the northern coast of Haiti. He was a baby when his family moved to Montreal, and then came to



**CHEF-OWNER:** Ivan Dorvil holds an oxtail entree at his Ivan's Gastro in North Miami Beach. The bar has a welcoming vibe.

### MIAMI REVIEW



**POTSTICKERS:** One of the shareable small plates at The Gang in Miami.

#### The Gang in midtown goes long on quirky flair, falls short on fare

BY JODI MAILANDER FARRELL  
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**T**he Gang is a new restaurant in midtown Miami where servers inexplicably dress as doctors in white coats, with stethoscopes and fake eyeglasses. The 90-seater is owned by a Romanian couple yet features Asian fusion, with an emphasis on Korean, Indian and Vietnamese flavors, although no

body from those cultures appears to be in the kitchen or anywhere nearby.

"Would you like me to check your heart?" a waiter awkwardly laughed, waving his stethoscope at us.

My mother always warned that if you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything. So there's this: From its

• TURN TO THE GANG, 6E

• TURN TO IVAN'S GASTRO, 2E

## DO THIS TODAY

## EARTH PARTY

**La Tierra Festival** is an indoor/outdoor event that celebrates Mother Earth with performances by Fort Lauderdale jam band The Heavy Pets, Stokeswood, Ghost Owl, Crazy Fingers, 7 Below — A Tribute to Phish, Floyd is Dead, The Funky Nuggets and Eric Garcia of Juke.

Details: 2 p.m. Saturday at Railroad Blues, 28 NE 14th St., Miami; railroadbluesmiami.com; \$20.



LOVERBOY

## FROM THE SEA

Loverboy headlines on Saturday night with a full line-up of weekend music, also including the Blues Brothers Soul Review Tribute and Nashville singer Cole Taylor, at the Pompano Beach Seafood Festival.

Details: 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday, and 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday, at the Pompano Pier, 222 N. Pompano Beach Blvd.; pompanobeachseafoodfestival.com; \$10 Friday, \$15 Saturday and Sunday, 12 and under free.

## KEY WEST

## Island's drinking scene gets more sophisticated

## • KEY WEST, FROM IE

And that's how many locals' stories go: "I came here on vacation, fell in love with the place, and never left."

"You really just can't beat your daily life here," Shultz said. "You probably have the best collection of people from all over the place that get along that you could ever have."

## CRAFT BEER BUBBLES UP

Shultz opened The Porch (429 Caroline St., 305-517-6358) in July 2010 with business partner Keith St. Peter. A bar dedicated to craft beers and fine wines inside a historic sea-foam green Victorian mansion overlooking Duval, the property's large front porch and garden begs to entertain.

"I always wanted to own a bar," Shultz said. "My grandparents owned a bar. And I felt like something was missing on the island. We wanted to make a place that we liked to hang out in."

With 18 beers rotating through the taps, 50 more in bottles and about 40 wines, The Porch became an instant hit, catering to an eclectic mix of locals — from fishermen to performance artists to off-duty bartenders — who swing by to snag a spot on the porch, sip

on suds and watch the tourists stream by. Savvy tourists soon joined the party, too.

Since then, Shultz, 39, has become an island mogul, following The Porch with 2 Cents restaurant (416 Applewhite Ln., 305-414-8626) in January 2013, The Other Side cocktail bar (also 429 Caroline St.) last May and the forthcoming Waterfront Brewery set to open in the coming weeks at 201 William St., inside the old Waterfront Market at the historic seaport.

"I can't help myself," Shultz said with a laugh.

In each new endeavor, the formula has been the same: fill a void on the island and get the locals' stamp of approval.

## A GASTRO PUB IS BORN

At 2 Cents, a creative gastropub with steampunk light fixtures and intergalactic mural art, tucked away on a quiet lane off Duval, Shultz and St. Peter partnered with Chris Otten, chef-owner of the popular organic burrito stand Bad Boy Burrito.

"We wanted to do pub fare at an elevated level," Shultz said. "It's high-end food in a comfortable place where we try to use the freshest, highest-grade, best ingredients possible."

The menu is modern and

## Where to stay

**The new:** The Marker Waterfront Resort, 200 William St., 305-501-5193. Opened in December, it is the first new hotel built on the island since 1994. From \$489 a night.

**The now:** NYAH, 420 Margaret St., 305-296-9259. Short for Not Your Average Hotel, this wallet-friendly guesthouse is tucked behind a charming conch cottage in Old Town. From \$40 a person or \$359 a night.

**The next:** The Gates, 3824 N. Roosevelt Blvd., 305-320-0930. This is the first hotel you'll see when you turn onto the island from U.S. 1, with shuttle service to be provided soon to Old Town. The hotel opened this month. Introductory rates from \$249 a night.

**The classic:** Casa Marina, 1500 Reynolds St., 305-296-3535. Conceived by Henry Flagler, this 311-room Waldorf Astoria property is a South Florida gem. From \$449 a night.

## COCKTAILS OVER HERE

The Other Side (305-849-0930) is situated on the other side of The Porch in the same historic building. You enter a grand foyer where on one side, a door opens to the suds conviviality of The

Porch and on the other side, a door leads to, well, The Other Side, a refined cocktail bar with a speakeasy library vibe decorated with tufted leather chairs, a mounted jackalope head and original photography by Michael Marrero.

No matter what your party is in the mood for — beer, cocktails, wine — you can head to either bar and then meet outside to drink together on the porch.

Under the guidance of head bartender Tim Rabior, The Other Side is Key West's first bar truly devoted to classic and creative cocktail with attention to spirits, fresh fruit and herbs. Classics range from a Hemingway Daiquiri to Cham-

## STREET ART

**Wynwood Life Street Festival** takes over Miami's hippest neighborhood with art exhibitions, fashion shows, live music, interactive features, food trucks and a collaborative cooking showcase highlighting Wynwood restaurants and chefs.

Details: Noon-midnight Saturday, noon-9 p.m. Sunday at NW Second Avenue and 23rd Street, Miami; wynwoodlife.com; \$15.

## GET CRAFTY

**Made it Myself Little Haiti Fair** offers a marketplace of handmade and organic products crafted by local and international artisans.

Details: 2-8 p.m. Saturday at Caribbean Marketplace, 5925 NE Second Ave., Miami; free.

## FLAVORS

Try some Latin American cuisine at the **Festival of Flavors** with prominent chefs from different South Florida restaurants offering their best plus international musicians, paesino horses and more.

Details: Noon-10 p.m. at Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition, 10901 Coral Way, Miami; miamifestivalsabores; \$25-\$40.

Located inside an old Coca-Cola bottle factory, Key West Legal Rum is producing seven year-round rum varieties and more than 15 seasonal offshoots. Menta even ages some of his rum in American oak barrels that he soaks in seawater for local flavor.

His distillery and tasting room (105 Simonton St., 305-294-1441) is open to visitors daily.

"We can't keep Sloppy Joe's stocked," Menta says of the high demand for his rum at a popular watering hole and others on the island. New hotels, like The Marker and The Gates, also are putting his rum front and center in welcome cocktails and bar menus.

Key West has remained an attractive destination over the years because of its people, a free-spirited and creative crew.

And this new class of culinary and libation movers and shakers is honoring that history.

"I like providing a platform for people to do their talents," Shultz said, referring to his team of chefs, bartenders and business partners. "They make me look good."

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## MIAMI REVIEW

## Asian fusion gets lost in translation at The Gang

## • THE GANG, FROM IE

large picture windows, The Gang offers an excellent view of Gigi's bustling dining room across the street.

Chili dip with Vietnamese pork rolls packs a nice one-two punch, and Thai-style green papaya salad makes for a refreshing albeit sweet starter big enough for two.

We can forgive Miami newcomers Bogdan and Jacqueline Niculae for trying too hard to be quirky in the shaggy-bearded ironic world around Wynwood. But it's not so easy to forgive one small, fatty pork chop served as an entrée — despite being billed on the menu as plural chops — or the accompanying tepid pickled carrots, overly sweet pineapple sauce and bowl of plain white rice topped with green onion.

We barely flinched at getting sprayed with water as a server cascaded it into trendy tin camping mugs. We did mind, though, when our Malaysian lamb chops and roasted vegetables came out of the open kitchen overcooked and served with a three-inch strip of flavorless ground paprika.

On paper, The Gang's offerings sound plenty appealing. A simple menu on a clipboard breaks down dinner into starters, soups and salads, and 10 main dishes, with limited wine, beer and cocktail choices. Bogdan Niculae is an attentive host, hovering over the dining room and stopping by tables to check on diners with a smile at the end of meals.

Even the best intentions, however, seem lost in translation.

Skewered Indonesian-style chicken



THE GANG MIAMI

**CHICKEN SATAY:** An Indonesian-style appetizer served with peanut sauce at The Gang in Miami.

satay is tender and juicy, but it lacks any grill or marinade flavor. Its cold, thick peanut gravy tastes more like peanut butter than sauce. Shrimp tempura is even more disappointing, blanketed in untoasted white sesame seeds over a mushy batter that obscures the meat.

Black slate platters that are used for most entrees are too large to fit on two-top tables, leaving hardly any room for glasses or utensils. The awkward presentation seems overblown for dishes like roasted, medium-rare Korean beef, which was nicely pink in the middle but consisted of three meager strips of meat paired with thick, lukewarm slices of red onion and mushrooms.

Desserts such as chocolate lava cake with mint ice cream and Indian sweet carrot pudding are fine punctuation for the night if you're still hungry.

With its subway tile walls, rough-hewn wood floor and mismatched chairs, The Gang borrows boho-chic design cues from Anthropologie. Scattered old magazine ads and white shutters whimsically decorate one wall. Six washing machines at the end of the rectangular dining room double as the base for a bar — another seemingly illogical feature.

Paired with the waitstaff's medical gear, the washers serve as a reminder that there are worse things in life than a bad meal: You could be paying a visit to the doctor or doing laundry.

Then again, when those burdens seem more pleasant than a night at a restaurant, the prognosis for The Gang is grim.

Critics dine anonymously at the Miami Herald's expense.

## If you go

**Place:** The Gang Miami.  
**Address:** 3500 N. Miami Ave., Miami.  
**Rating:** ★½ (Subpar)  
**Contact:** 305-570-9430, thegangmiami.com.  
**Hours:** Dinner daily.  
**Prices:** Starters \$6-\$18, entrees \$18-\$32, desserts \$12.  
**FYI:** Full bar; street parking and nearby lots; all major credit cards.

## WINE

## 9 pinot grigios that won't disappoint

## Fred Tasker

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**T**rue story: I was treating my wife's 20-something nieces to dinner one night in an expensive restaurant, where the wine list started at \$30 and went up like a rocket. The young women were up to drinking some wine in the happy family setting, and I could see they knew little about it and were not going to pay much attention to what they drank.

In my cleverness (or parsimony), I ordered bottles of pinot grigio at the low end of the price list. They sipped it happily and thought their uncle Fred was a pretty nice dude (or whatever that generation calls me these days).

My thought process at the time: Even inexpensive, mass-produced pinot grigios can be drinkable — seldom worse than bland — while other mass-produced wines (especially sauvignon blanc and pinot noir) can be unforgiving of such treatment.

I've since modified that position a little due to a couple of painful experiences, but I still believe it holds true overall.

Pinot grigio seem most at home in northern Italy. Outside Italy, pinot grigio wines often are called pinot gris. It's the same grape. Both names mean "gray pinot" from the color of the grapes.

In Italy, pinot grigio country is cool, high-altitude locations such as Alto Adige and Trentino, in the foothills of the Alps and the nearby Dolomite mountains.

In New Zealand, pinot grigio is made around Christchurch, in the country's cool South Island.

In California, pinot grigio grows in Monterey County, cooled by Pacific Ocean fogs.

Swanson Vineyards grows it 750 feet up Sonoma Mountain for its cool weather.

Also in California, Kendall-



Jackson gets grapes from Monterey, Sonoma and elsewhere and makes a particularly rich and flavorful pinot grigio by adding other white grapes — roussanne, grüner veltliner, chardonnay, viognier, albariño.

Pinot grigio is usually picked less ripe and vinified to be light and crisp, while pinot gris is often picked riper and vinified to be richer and softer and fuller in body.

Good pinot grigio/gris wines are usually light-bodied, dry and crisp, with citrus or green apple flavors. The better ones can take on additional honeyed richness and fuller, smoother, almost oily body.

Both styles are great with raw oysters (try them in a spirits glass as a shooter), shrimp, light seafood such as mahi, tilapia or cod (sample them with a fish taco), with all kinds of chicken dishes or vegetarian lasagna and other tofu dishes.

They're often lower in alcohol than big chardonnays or séminons, which these days means 12 percent alcohol or so instead of 14 or 15 percent.

Oh, and they're usually cheaper on supermarket shelves and wine lists. (Do I have your attention now?)

Here are some very nice pinot grigios.

## HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

• 2013 Swanson Vineyards Pinot Grigio, "Morning Sun Vineyard," Sonoma Mountain (89 percent pinot grigio, 11 percent chardonnay): rich and crisp, with flavors of citrus, melons and vanilla and a long finish; \$21.

• 2013 Giesen Estate Pinot Gris, Marlborough, New Zealand: light and crisp, honeysuckle aromas, flavors of cinnamon, vanilla and pears, very smooth; \$12.

• 2013 Alois Lageder "Porger" Pinot Grigio, Alto Adige, Italy; hint of oak, rich and creamy and full-bodied, with intense floral aromas and powerful flavors of pears and minerals; can be aged three or four years; \$25.

## RECOMMENDED

• 2013 Argento Pinot Grigio, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina: light-bodied and crisp, with floral aromas and flavors of white peaches and minerals; \$10.

• 2013 La Merika Pinot Grigio, Monterey: light and lively, with aromas of camellias and flavors of ripe pears; \$13.

• 2013 Ponzi Pinot Blanc, Willamette Valley, Washington: tiny hint of sweetness, floral aromas, flavors of kiwis and melons; \$20.

• 2013 Alois Lageder Pinot Grigio, Dolomiti, Italy: light and crisp, with honeysuckle aromas and rich ripe pear flavors; \$15.

• 2014 Kendall-Jackson "Vintner's Reserve" Pinot Grigio, California (79 percent pinot gris, 9 percent roussanne, 4 percent grüner veltliner, 3 percent chardonnay, 3 percent viognier, 2 percent albariño): ripe and rich and intensely fruity, with floral aromas and tropical fruit flavors; \$15.

• 2014 Da Vinci Pinot Grigio delle Venezie IGT (95 percent pinot grigio, 5 percent chardonnay): floral aromas, flavors of ripe green apples and minerals; \$15.