



New Kids on the Block

How a girl from **Australia** and a boy from the Florida **Panhandle** met over meatloaf, fell for each other in the **kitchen** and opened a crazy-good **restaurant** in Miami's best dining **neighborhood**.



Sunset Harbour's Stiltsville Fish Bar is an homage to the love story of chef-partners Janine Booth and Jeff McInnis. The culinary power couple met when McInnis was executive chef at Gigi in Midtown Miami, and Booth paid a visit twice in the same day, lured by his meatloaf special. "I'd never even heard of meatloaf," recalled Booth, a native of Australia, who was in culinary school at Le Cordon Bleu at the time. "But of course, it wasn't just any meatloaf. It was made with short rib and caramelized onions and smoked plantains and barbecue sauce. It was amazing. I wanted to know how to make it." The chance encounter led to an internship with McInnis at Gigi and moving with him to Yardbird Southern Table & Bar when he opened it in Miami Beach in 2011. Since then, Booth and McInnis went north to open the wildly popular Root & Bone in New York as chef partners, and they returned to Miami in 2016 to open The Sarsaparilla Club inside the Shelborne Hotel. That restaurant converted into a Root & Bone offshoot around the time Stiltsville was gearing up for its launch late last year. Booth and McInnis, both Bravo *Top Chef* alums (her, Season 11; him, Season 5) also are the proud parents of a baby girl, Sunny.

WORDS BY SHAYNE BENOWITZ / PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIPE CUEVAS
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Booth and McInnis answered Miami's call for a chef-driven fish house. Stiltsville unites McInnis' passions for locally caught fish, farm-fresh produce and Southern hospitality.



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: An Absolut Elyx cocktail served in a custom copper mermaid vessel called 'The Janine'; cobia tiradito with crispy hominy and popcorn; flourless Meyer lemon cake; wood-grilled oysters with herb butter and charred sourdough.

STRIKING COUPLE

On the sun-drenched patio of Stiltsville during a lull before a recent brunch service, the couple reminisced about how their attraction simmered in the kitchen before either of them acted on it.

"I think Jeff was a little more interested at first," Booth said innocently.

"Whatever, you liked me," he rebuffed, unfazed.

"Well, maybe I thought you were cute," she conceded.

They have an easy chemistry, and their love is apparent in the way they interact with each other and the way he looked at her during our photo shoot that morning. Both are blessed with beautiful bone structure and beachy blonde hair, making for a striking couple.

Their first date actually started across the street from the restaurant, at the boat ramp in Sunset Harbour next to Maurice Gibb Memorial Park. McInnis took Booth out on his boat, cruising across the Venetian Islands through Biscayne Bay to the original Stiltsville homes, first erected on the bay in the 1930s.

"We put a couple of lines in the water," Booth said. "I don't think we caught much of anything."

McInnis is a native of the Florida Panhandle who grew up fishing the Gulf and working on his grandparents' farms in Alabama. In many ways, Stiltsville unites his longtime passions for locally caught fish, farm-fresh produce and Southern hospitality.

"We have the Atlantic, the Gulf and the Caribbean right here in our backyard with this abundance of fish, and there really wasn't a chef-driven fish house," he said. "For a long time, seafood in Miami meant sushi flown in from other parts of the world."

CATCH OF THE DAY

Two clawfoot tubs filled with ice showcase the day's fresh catch at the front of Stiltsville Fish Bar: yellow jack, black grouper, wahoo and triple tail, all sourced from local fishermen from the Keys to Stuart. The daily catch figures prominently onto the menu, served with choices of sauces (everything from cilantro salsa verde to aji amarillo) and sides (stoneground grits to sweet plantain mofongo).

Other creative menu highlights include smoked scallops with crispy ham chips, corn spoon bread with butter-poached lobster tail, and an elevated take on coconut shrimp: sweet local Royal Red shrimp wrapped in shredded phyllo dough, flash-fried in coconut oil and topped with toasted coconut bits.

The restaurant's design plays up the seaside fish house concept with a convertible open-air dining room and a chic-ramshackle aesthetic with exposed wooden rafters, support columns resembling pilings, beer taps made of dramatic swordfish bills, translucent-shell chandeliers clusters of purple barnacles as *objets d'art*. There also are plans for a forthcoming rooftop deck to savor prime sunset views alongside their rum-forward cocktail menu.

So what brought Booth and McInnis back to Miami after their success in New York?

"It was really this neighborhood," McInnis said, polishing off a pre-shift salad of butter lettuce topped with Florida avocado and heirloom tomatoes. He gestured at the unobstructed views of Biscayne Bay from his sidewalk table in Sunset Harbour. "I mean, look around. There's no other place in Miami like this. The city's best chefs are here. We wanted to be a part of it and bring something new to the neighborhood."

1787 Purdy Avenue, Miami Beach; 786-353-0477; stiltsvillefishbar.com.



WHERE TO EAT



Sunset Harbour

The micro-neighborhood that packs Miami's biggest culinary punch.

WORDS BY SHAYNE BENOWITZ / PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIPE CUEVAS / ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN LATTRELL

Set against Biscayne Bay in the northwest corner of South Beach, Sunset Harbour is a pedestrian-friendly enclave (with bountiful parking) that teems with savvy fashionistas and locals in yoga pants. And did we mention the food?

Barely spanning three blocks, this micro-neighborhood is densely populated with both casual and upscale restaurants from some of Miami's most beloved and under-the-radar chefs.

Peppered into the mix are locally owned indie shops, a gourmet grocery store, and mod beauty salons and fitness studios, giving Sunset Harbour a decidedly laid-back and original feel.

It's unique to the rest of buzzy South Beach — and anywhere else in Miami — which is precisely its appeal. Here's a quintessential culinary roadmap to our favorite eating 'hood in town:

THE ORIGINALS

SARDINIA

Want to know the secret ingredient of Chef Pietro Vardeu's sumptuous orecchiette with broccoli rabe and wild boar? We asked: Saffron broth. It brings out the dish's sweet and acidic flavors. 1801 Purdy Avenue; 305-531-2228; sardinia-ristorante.com.

PURDY LOUNGE

Before there was Sunset Harbour, there was Purdy Lounge. The beloved bar has been a South Beach mainstay since 2000 for its wide selection of high-gravity craft beers (we like Chimay Blue), live music and low-key vibes. 1811 Purdy Avenue; 305-531-4622; purdylounge.com.

PUBBELLY NOODLE BAR

When Pubbelly opened as an Asian-Latin gastropub in 2010, it ushered in a dining renaissance to this sleepy residential corner of South Beach. Now that it's been reincarnated as Pubbelly Noodle Bar, go for the signature ramen with barbecue pork belly and bean sprouts in an aromatic lemongrass broth. 1418 20th Street; 305-532-7555; pubbelly.com.



Sardinia

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 PUBBELLY SUSHI | 5 LUCALI / BAY CLUB | 9 TRUE LOAF BAKERY | 13 NAIYAR A | 17 DR SMOOD | 21 STILTSVILLE FISH BAR |
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Soul Tavern



Jugofresh



True Loaf Bakery



Naiyara

THE NEWCOMERS

SUNNY POKE

Sushi Garage's Chef Sunny Oh recently expanded next door with his namesake poke bar, providing a casual, daytime alternative to sate your cravings for fresh tuna and salmon. Opt for the Classic Bowl made with tuna, avocado, wakame, red onion, tempura crumbs and crispy shallot, all doused in sesame soy sauce and served with a frosty probiotic yogurt. *1784 West Avenue; 305-763-8355.*

OFA

Shorthand for the classic Brazilian side dish farofa, made of pan-sautéed toasted yuca flour with butter and herbs, Ofa features the dish prominently on its menu. “There are tons of family recipes all over Brazil, and everyone’s mom or grandma makes it slightly different,” said Lucas Scudler, partner and operations manager. At Ofa, go for the Egg Farofa and sprinkle it over your entrée of picadinho filet mignon to play with contrasting textures. *1929 Purdy Avenue; 305-763-8766; ofarestaurant.com.*

CLEAN LIVING

JUGOFRESH

Current obsession: Kombucha floats. “They’re for when you’re a healthy adult, but still want to feel

like a 12-year-old kid,” founder and CEO Matthew Sherman said. The frothy, flavorful concoction is made with locally brewed black tea kombucha, vegan cashew ice cream and superfood blue majik whipped cream with a splash of cold-pressed juice. All in the name of a healthy gut and glowing skin. *1935 West Avenue, Suite 102; 786-472-2552; jugofresh.com.*

DIRT

Swing by Dirt for a fast-casual, organic bite with plenty of vegan, vegetarian gluten-free and paleo options. Breakfast is served all day, so try the Clean Bowl made with pasture-raised egg whites, avo mash, sautéed kale, roasted sweet potatoes and turkey bacon with a tomatillo salsa. *1834 Bay Road; 786-453-2488; dirteatclean.com.*

SOUL TAVERN

A vegetarian gastropub inspired by the five elements and founded by a doctor of Chinese medicine — where else would you go for a post-yoga bite? Start your journey with the Soul Salad, made with arugula, hijiki, yellow beet, apple, avocado, red bell pepper and seeds in an oregano-mustard vinaigrette. Then move on to the Soulful Ramen — a nourishing vegetable broth layered with yam noodles, mushrooms and the option of a pasture-raised egg. *1801 West Avenue; 305-925-0799; soultavern.com.*



Pubblelly Noodle Bar

BREAD, COLD BREW & BRUNCH

PANTHER COFFEE

While it’s not the original Panther — that designation belongs to their Wynwood roaster — this Sunset Harbour coffee shop location solidified the area’s appeal. A loyal clientele flocks here daily for locally roasted, ethically sourced coffee. *1875 Purdy Avenue; 305-677-3852; panthercoffee.com.*

TRUE LOAF BAKERY

Across a breezeway from Panther, True Loaf has developed a dedicated following for its sweets and savories, like perfectly pungent sourdough country loaves baked inside a steam-injected oven. *1894 Bay Road; 786-216-7207.*

ICEBOX CAFÉ

With made-from-scratch cakes famously approved by Oprah, Icebox Café is still thriving after its big move from Lincoln Road to Sunset Harbour. While there are plenty of naughty indulgences — helloooo, Chocolate Delight Layer Cake — you could choose something healthier, like Avocado Seed Salad made with arugula and piquant grana padano cheese. *1855 Purdy Avenue; 305-583-8448; iceboxcafe.com.*

SUSHI & THAI

NAIYARA

Translated from Thai, Naiyara means “friendly, honest and hardworking,” all qualities that emanate effortlessly from Chef Piyarat Potha Arreeratn, more affectionately known as Chef Bee. The Thai-born chef got his start at Nobu before going out on his own at Oishi Thai in North Miami, which continues its successful run. Diners crowd Chef Bee’s upscale Naiyara for his to-die-for Salmon Tacos with avocado and truffle, Crispy Sriracha Chicken Wings, Drunken Udon Noodles and more. *1854 Bay Road; 786-275-6005; naiyara.com.*

PUBBELLY SUSHI

Pubblelly Noodle Bar’s sister restaurant specializes in inventive sushi layered with flavors you didn’t know were possible. Don’t skip the Spicy Bigeye Tuna Roll atop crispy “arroz pegao” drizzled in truffle oil and sea salt. *1424 20th Street; 305-531-9282; pubbelysushi.com.*

SUSHI GARAGE

Made with soy sauce, butter, sesame oil, carrots, zucchini and mushrooms on a bed of sizzling fried rice prepared tableside, Sushi Garage’s Stone Pots are the ultimate sharing dish at this trendy Japanese restaurant. Add beef tenderloin to supplement all the fresh sushi you’ll down as an appetizer. *1784 West Avenue; 305-763-8355; sushigarage.com.*



Sushi Garage



Barceloneta

PIZZA, TACOS & TAPAS

LUCALI

The denizens of Sunset Harbour have claimed this iconic Brooklyn pizzeria transplant as their own. Lucali wins fans with its pared-down menu and rustic, convivial atmosphere where the pies take center stage. Can't go wrong with a classic: Pepperoni with garlic and fresh basil. *1930 Bay Road; 305-695-4441; lucali.com.*

TEQUIZTLAN

Serving an extensive menu of authentic Mexican specialties, there's nothing quite like Tequiztlan's straightforward Hard-Shell Tacos made with ground beef, lettuce, pico de gallo, cheese and crema to transport this writer back to her Southern California childhood. *1844 Bay Road; 305-397-8442; tequiztlan.com.*

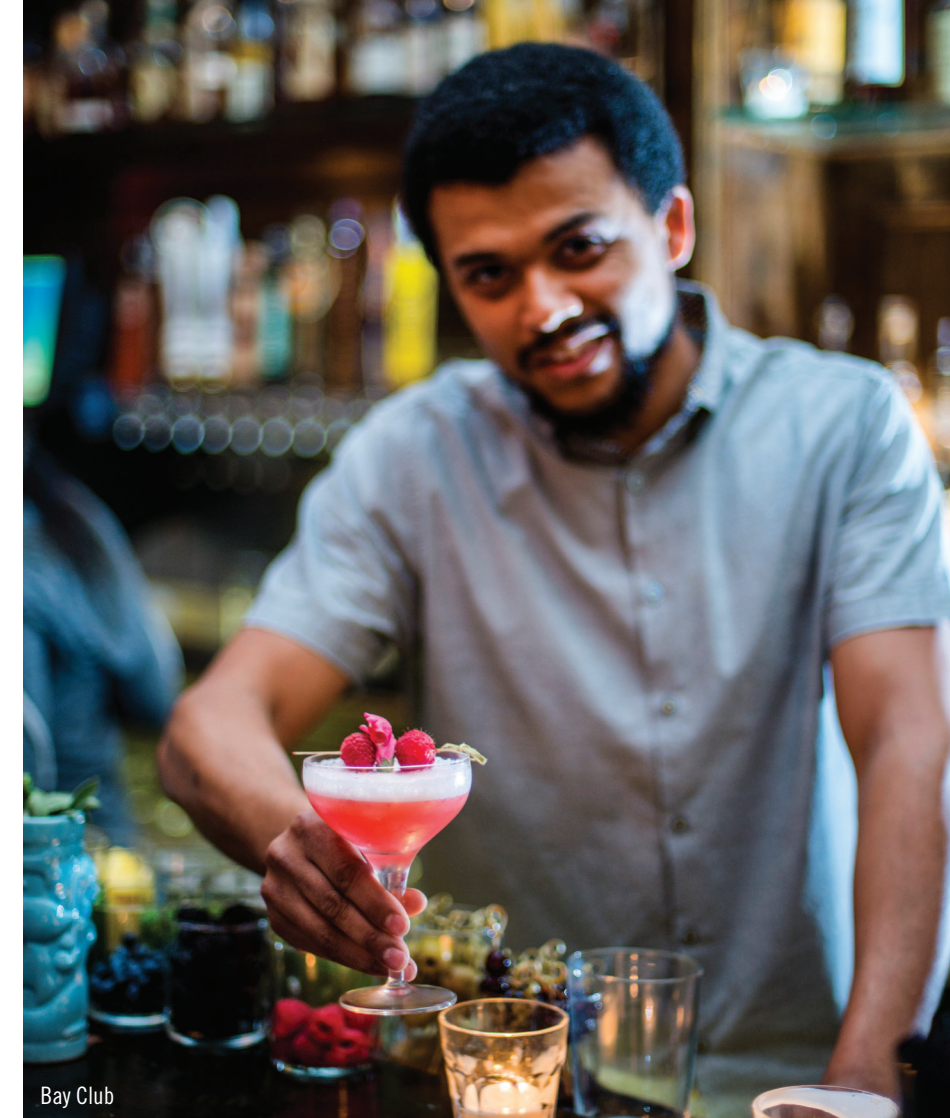
BARCELONETA

Helmed by Puerto Rican-born Chef Juliana Gonzalez, Barceloneta is the neighborhood's sophisticated Spanish tapas restaurant with a killer gin and tonic menu, as well as crave-worthy classics like Patatas Bravas, Pan con Tomate, and Iberico Ham and Manchego Cheese plates. Gonzalez trained under Michelin-starred chef Sergi Arola in Madrid before cooking in Miami at The Restaurant at The Setai and Nobu. Now, she's focusing her knowledge of global cuisine on Spanish food at Barceloneta. *1400 20th Street; 305-538-9299; barcelonetarestaurant.com.*



Tequiztlan

Locals belly up to the bar at Bay Club for creative craft cocktails and — insider tip! — personal pizzas from Lucali next door.



Bay Club

DRINKS!

BAY CLUB

Lucali's adjacent cocktail bar might just be Miami's best-kept secret. The bar draws a friendly crowd of young-ish professionals at happy hour and late night for creative craft cocktails and laid-back vibes.

Pro Tip 1: Order the off-menu cocktail Opening Day, with vodka, black pepper, basil and tomato. Clean and refreshing. **Pro Tip 2:** Personal-size Lucali pizzas are exclusively served here. *1930 Bay Road; 305-695-4441; lucali.com.*

LA MODERNA

La Moderna boasts an impressive Negroni program to pair with their regional Italian fare. The Florentine aperitif — Martin Miller Gin, Cocchi Torino Sweet Vermouth and Gancia Americano Bitters — comes in four varieties, including one that's blended and then aged in an oak cask for six months. The flavor is satisfyingly smoky and rich. *1874 Bay Road; 786-717-7274; lamoderna-miami.com.*



La Moderna