

# If you only eat three meals in Miami Beach, make sure they're here

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**Clarification:** An earlier version of this story included a recommendation for Bakehouse Brasserie, which closed its doors Oct. 8. The story has been updated.

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By Necee Regis October 4

Celebrated for its glitz and glamour, Art Deco architecture and palm trees swaying near the turquoise Atlantic, Miami Beach's South Beach neighborhood draws swarms of visitors each year. A melting pot of cultures — Latin American, Caribbean, European — shapes its vibrant dining scene. One can find pretty much everything, including strong and sugary Cuban cafecitos, Peruvian ceviche, fire-grilled pizza and chilled stone crab claws. The trick is finding places where the food exceeds the hype.

Escape the carnivalesque mayhem of Ocean Drive (\$45 mojitos, anyone?) and head to the quieter neighborhood referred to by locals as South of Fifth, a.k.a. SoFi. This narrowing triangle of streets, from Fifth to the end of the island at South Pointe Park, is fast becoming *the* place to visit and dine.

They say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and visitors on lower Collins Avenue will find breakfast nirvana when they step inside the cotton-candy-colored building that's home to Big Pink. (305-532-4700, [mylesrestaurantgroup.com](http://mylesrestaurantgroup.com), 157 Collins Ave.) The retro diner-style interior boasts long rows of connected red tables, oversize TVs on the walls and a menu so ginormous you'll need both hands to hold it. Eggs are served every imaginable way: in burritos, omelets (5 eggs!), and fried, scrambled and poached with sides of steak, corned beef hash, polenta fries, and the usual ham, bacon and sausage. Seven elaborate eggs Benedict skilleters include the over-the-top "Maryland Crab Cake Benny" and "Fried Chicken and Waffle Benny." Speaking of waffles, the Nutella version, served with strawberries and whipped cream, is certain to satisfy sugar cravings, as do the red velvet pancakes. Smoothies and juices are available for those who want lighter fare. A full-service bar offers fresh fruit mojitos, bloody Marys, and specialty cocktails. If you sleep till noon, no worries. Breakfast is available all day long.

Shuffle in from the Third Street beach to Lolo's Surf Cantina, a casual spot serving authentic Mexican cuisine in the lower level of the Marriott Stanton South Beach hotel ([loloscantina.com](http://loloscantina.com); 305-735-6973; 161 Ocean Dr.). Mexican-born chef Richard

Ampudia named his spot after his grandmother and, indeed, the dishes have a homey quality, as if you had stumbled upon a shack on the Pacific coast of ol' Mexico. Roasted bone marrow chalupas, rib-eye tacos and whole snapper guajillo are standouts, as is an order — or two or three — of the grilled corn with cotija cheese, chili powder and lime. Grab a stool at the bar, or dine at simple wood tables, to enjoy chilled cervezas or salt-rimmed margaritas and crispy chips accompanied by avocado and roasted jalapeño guacamole or a smoky pumpkin seed dip. Signature cocktails include the Oaxaca (mescal, watermelon, lime, and salty water) and the Sour Coyote (reposado tequila, lemon, passion fruit, chili and egg whites). After lunch at Lolo's, a siesta is a necessity.

Fourteen years is a long time for a restaurant to survive in any city, and in Miami — a town where places open and close with the frequency of rising and falling tides — it's an eternity. And yet La Locanda, an upscale trattoria open since 2003, has thrived in this neighborhood ([lalocandmiami.com](http://lalocandmiami.com); 305-538-6277; 419 Washington Ave.). Loyal fans, both locals and in-the-know tourists, come for its authentic Italian menu of brick-oven-baked pizzas, homemade pastas and warm hospitality straight from a Marcello Mastroianni film. White-tablecloth dining is available alfresco — along busy Washington Avenue — or in the stylish interior, cast in pale stone and warm wood. Pizza La Locanda is a reliable choice, topped with mozzarella, arugula, shaved Parmesan, cherry tomatoes (no red sauce!) and Parma ham. House-made pasta favorites include black-ink pasta tossed with shrimp in a light, spicy tomato sauce, and silky tagliolini with porcini mushrooms. Secondi courses include veal chops and scaloppine, chicken and fish. No meal is complete without creamy panna cotta, accompanied by a glass of limoncello.

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