

# Looking for a Winter Escape?

*Welcome to Miami*

By Vanessa Pascale

**MIAMI IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA.** The beautiful beachfront hotels, high-end shopping destinations, long list of tantalizing restaurants and energetic vibe are just a few of the reasons visitors flock to South Florida year-round and especially during the winter. Early December always attracts the upper echelon, including celebrities, VIPs, jetsetters and art enthusiasts to the event of the season, Art Basel Miami Beach.

We pulled together an abbreviated dining guide to help you navigate Miami's outstanding culinary landscape. These three restaurants not only serve the most delicious fare in the city, but they are also stunning spots to see and be seen.



## Jaya at The Setai Dinner and show

Jaya at The Setai Miami Beach is a super luxurious hotel, consistently awarded Forbes' Five-Star award, and serves a truly extraordinary dining experience to awaken the senses. Set in a gorgeous alfresco courtyard surrounding a pond flanked by towering palm trees, Jaya's Asian Night Bazaar is exotic, thrilling and fun. While guests relish hand-crafted cocktails, signature dishes like Peking duck and truffle dumplings, tandoor oven delights and wok-crafted curries, among other Asian-inspired bites, they are entertained by aerial acrobats and contortionists as the DJ spins lively music.

I started my night with a lychee martini. For dinner, we ordered the crispy octopus, tuna crudo, Thai chicken salad and tuna tacos – all of which were expertly plated, incredibly tasty and fresh. For our main course, we ordered the signature half roasted Peking duck (an absolute must), Thai beef, Pad Thai, chicken fried rice and wok vegetables. Every bite was savored. Of course, no dinner is complete without dessert, so we ordered their scrumptious vanilla cheesecake and chocolate cherry dome with ice cream. This highly glamorous dining experience is a must while in Miami Beach.

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## MOTEK Cafe Casual yet chic

MOTEK Coral Gables is a vibe with their bright white and gold décor punctuated with lush greenery. It's giving mid-century modern meets the European coast. Established in 2020, MOTEK has become a Miami staple known for their authentic Israeli-Mediterranean cuisine and extensive kosher-style offerings. In addition to this location, they have restaurants in downtown Miami, Aventura and new openings debuting in Brickell City Centre and Miami Beach. Here, they know what they're doing with their gourmet cuisine, alluring ambience and stellar service.

We started off with refreshing watermelon coolers and a couple of shared plates for the table: tzatziki, hummus mushroom and a Greek salad. These dishes were light, appetizing and full of fresh ingredients. For the main course, we ordered a wonderfully prepared whole branzino and 10-ounce ribeye steak kebab with grilled vegetables. Every morsel was tender and bursting with a symphony of rich flavors. For dessert, we indulged in their decadent chocolate bread pudding and a cappuccino with a foam imprint: "L'Chaim (to life!) MOTEK." I highly recommend MOTEK for brunch, lunch, or dinner; they whisk you away with their European touches and delicious indulgences.

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## Nikki Beach Miami Beach Alfresco beach appeal

If you're not dining on the beach, are you even in Miami? Nikki Beach Miami Beach is the quintessential South Beach attraction. Located in the affluent South of Fifth neighborhood, this 46,000-square-foot beachfront property boasts a luxury beach club, restaurant, bar, lifestyle boutique and indoor and outdoor private event spaces. Guests amble through a verdant garden lined with palm trees, ferns and bright, exotic flowers as they make their way to the dining area on the white sand. The outdoor patio and daybeds are frequently packed with a fancy clientele covering an elevated dining experience, bottle service, sushi and live musicians and DJs.

The relaxed ambience is cultivated with their signature white décor—umbrellas, daybeds, and seating—and rich touches of wood and bamboo. We popped in on a Saturday for lunch to experience "La Vie en Rosé." We booked a daybed and ordered a couple of bottles of rosé (the wine of choice here). Their menu offers a variety of appetizers, entrees, sharing platters, salads, sweets, cocktails and a curated selection of wine and Champagne.

Favorites include the Watermelon & Feta Salad, Sexy Salad (lobster, shrimp and crab meat) and Marbella Shrimp Pil Pil. We came for their famous sushi boat overloaded with 12 pieces of sashimi, tuna poke, salmon poke, Sanit Barth salmon roll, Ibiza rainbow roll, Hamachi roll, Marbella spicy tuna roll, 12 pieces of nigiri and Asian wakame salad. The exceptional spread was fresh, delicious and sated our sushi cravings. We sipped rosé, savored our sushi, and soaked in the music and sun. This is the perfect way to spend an afternoon in Miami.

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▲ (Top photo) JAYA: Lettuce, Tuna Tacos, Panang Curry

◀ JAYA: Peking Duck