

here takes Thai cuisine to a whole 'nother dimension, whether it's nuggets of fried shredded catfish like fish-in-fused air strewn over green mango salad; venison loin with a curry sauce so suave it would make a French chef weep; or spectacular kaffir lime flan with lemongrass sorbet. • Dinner nightly. Entrées \$21–\$33. 954/616-1152.

■ **hi-life café**—3000 N. Federal Highway. *American*. Get ready to enjoy delicious food and excellent service in an unpretentious but pretty venue. If you get there early, they still might have the popular Cajun kisses, jalapeños stuffed with cheese and wrapped in bacon. For the main course, we love the Hawaiian butterfish in a red curry sauce. To finish, try the coconut-orange chess pie (an old family favorite recipe). Hi-Life has a very nice contemporary wine list with good choices by the glass. • Dinner Tues.–Sun. Entrées \$17.95–\$28.95. 954/563-1395.

■ **himmarshee bar & grille**—210 S.W. Second St. *American*. This narrow little gem in downtown

Fort Lauderdale's hip Himmarshee Village is the perfect spot to enjoy dinner before catching a show at the Broward Center. Starters are first-rate. Fresh salads such as the nut-crusting goat cheese salad with apples and baby greens complement heartier appetizers like the butternut squash purses and crabmeat ravioli. Entrées are decent-sized portions of fresh fish, chops and steaks. The skirt steak is juicy and precisely prepared, and the Alaskan halibut is fork tender. A hot flourless chocolate torte is a delicious finish. • Lunch Mon.–Fri. Dinner nightly. Entrées \$22–\$35. 954/524-1818.

■ **il mulino**—1800 E. Sunrise Blvd. *Italian*. This modest, unpretentious Italian restaurant doesn't attempt to reinvent the culinary wheel. Instead, it dishes up big portions of simple, hearty, flavorful food at extremely reasonable prices. Don't miss burrata, fresh mozzarella with a creamy center, paired with slices of ripe tomato and prosciutto. Anelli, a sort of pizza dough wrap, is tasty and filling. (Try the Fiorentino.) Zuppa de pesce is a

wealth of perfectly cooked seafood over linguini in a light tomato-based sauce. Finish with the luscious cannoli. • Lunch and dinner Mon.–Sat. Entrées \$9.95–\$20.95. 954/524-1800.

■ **indigo**—Riverside Hotel, 620 E. Las Olas Blvd. *Seafood*. Enjoy delightful alfresco dining along Las Olas while sampling fresh seafood and exotic specialties. Dependable choices like ahi tuna and Florida grouper are joined by more intriguing dishes like black bass and rock lobster. Plus, landlubbers will enjoy a selection of steaks and chops. • Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Entrées \$9.50–\$36. 954/467-0045.

■ **jackson's steakhouse**—450 E. Las Olas Blvd. *Steaks*. With the ambience of a gentlemen's club, Jackson's draws a top-drawer crowd. This straight-from-the-hip steakhouse offers an array of veal and beef in a variety of sizes, including an unbeatable 22-ounce USDA Prime rib chop. (Remember to order your chocolate soufflé when you order your entrées.) Happily, the menu

wine+spirits

Presenting Pisco

A PERUVIAN SPIRIT IS MAKING THE ROUNDS IN SOUTH FLORIDA

It's brandy, but it doesn't look like brandy, doesn't taste like brandy and isn't aged like brandy. It doesn't come from France or even California.

It's pisco, born and bred in Peru. Though it may not look, taste or be aged like brandy (or brandy's upscale brother, cognac), it drinks every bit as smooth, sophisticated and satisfying. It's a great mixer, too, adding a uniquely fruity, almost floral character to anything from Mojitos to Bloody Marys.

The origins of pisco date back to the 1600s, when Spanish conquistadors planted and harvested grapes to make wine, with the surplus given to local farmers in and around the Peruvian port city of Pisco (whose name, by the way, means "bird" in the Quechua dialect). The locals fermented and distilled the grapes into a clear spirit known for its ready availability, potency and roughness. While popular in Peru, pisco hardly was a sensation elsewhere.

But all that is changing, with Peruvian entrepreneurs applying the same artisanal ethos

and methods to pisco as a new breed of distillers has applied to vodka, bourbon, tequila and rum. One of those distillers is Guillermo Ferreyros, who last year introduced his hand-crafted Pisco 100 to U.S. consumers.

It's currently available in five states and Puerto Rico. Locally it's on the bar menus at, among other restaurants, Cucina Dell'Arte, E.R. Bradley's and Nick & Johnnie's, where bartender Jessica Sanabria pours it to give a twist to Mojitos, the Cuba libre and the classic pisco sour.

While its distinctively fruity flavor combines with the herbal pungency of mint to make a killer version of the traditional Mojito, Sanabria says pisco's very uniqueness can make it a tough sell. "The hardest part is trying to explain what pisco is," she says. "I get a lot of questions, 'Is it vodka? Is it rum?' People are thinking what it's going to taste like before they even taste it."

What gives pisco its singular character begins with the aromatic grapes used in its production—Ferreyros distills some 18 pounds of Torontel and Italia grapes (plus the nonaromatic Quebranta) to make one liter of Pisco 100. Dis-



Nick & Johnnie's bartender Jessica Sanabria

tiling takes place in pot stills, not the "continuous process" stills used to mass-produce many vodkas and other spirits. Pisco is distilled directly to bottling strength, not cut with water or other liquids. Unlike brandy and cognac, pisco isn't aged in oak barrels, which impart both color and caramel and vanilla flavors. Instead, it's "rested" in neutral containers for at least three months to develop the natural grape flavors.

It's the not-brandy, not-cognac, not-vodka, not-rum spirit. And it's definitely worth trying.

—Bill Citara

VISIT BOCAMAG.COM TO FIND TWO PISCO COCKTAIL RECIPES FROM NICK & JOHNNIE'S.



Boca Raton Magazine Article

Website Link:

<http://www.bocamag.com/Boca-Raton-Magazine/January-2009/Presenting-Pisco/>

Excerpt from article – January, 2009 Issue:

Presenting Pisco

Bartender Jessica Sanabria of Nick & Johnnie's in Palm Beach whips up two recipes involving an increasingly popular Peruvian spirit.



Piscojito

Nick & Johnnie's, Palm Beach

2 ounces Pisco 100

6–8 fresh mint leaves

1 ounce simple syrup

1 ounce fresh lime juice

3 ounces soda

In a tall Collins glass, muddle mint leaves with Pisco. Add simple syrup, lime juice and ice. Add soda and stir lightly.

Garnish with mint sprig.

Pisco Libre

Nick & Johnnie's, Palm Beach

In a tall glass filled with ice, mix 1 ounce Pisco 100 with Coca-Cola and a squeeze of lime.

Garnish with lime wedge.