

# The China Grill experience on South Beach

## Travel Spotlight

MIKE COHEN



**SOUTH BEACH, Fla.** In both daytime and at nightfall, the South Beach section of Miami is a major entertainment destination, with hundreds of nightclubs, restaurants, boutiques and hotels. The area is popular with both American and international tourists with some having permanent or second homes.

On a nice night, there is nothing better to do than find a good parking lot and spend some time walking the streets of South Beach. Washington Avenue is one of the best-known streets here, running parallel with Ocean and Collins. Washington is notorious for having some of the world's largest and most popular nightclubs. During "season" (October 15 to May 15) the street is jammed with traffic until early in the morning (as late as 6 a.m.) every night of the week.

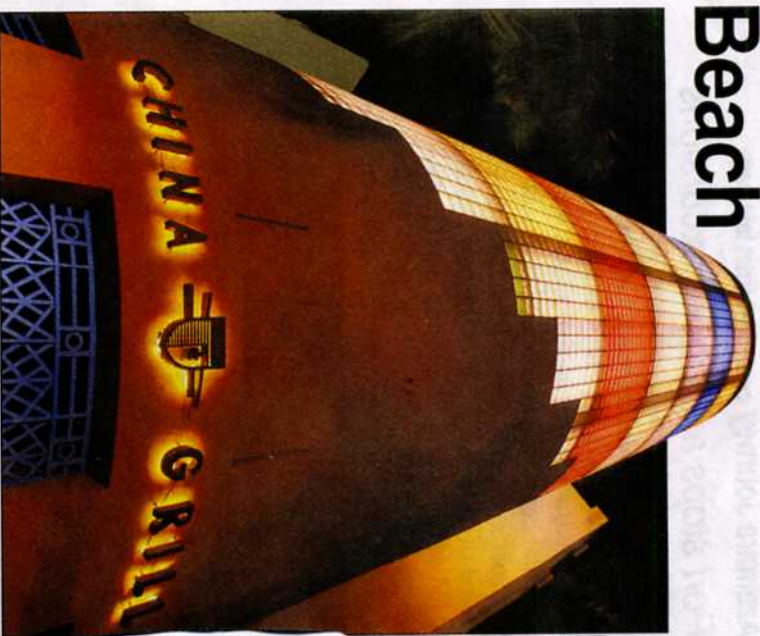
What drew my family and I to South Beach on one recent weekday evening was the critically acclaimed China Grill Restaurant at 404 Washington Avenue. I had heard about this place for years. It is owned by prominent American restaurateur Jeffrey Chodorow, the man who brought us the NBC reality show, *The Restaurant*. Chodorow's China Grill Management and its affiliates operate 26 restaurants in the US, UK and Mexico.

The Miami dining spot opened to rave reviews in 1995 and was instantly anointed the place to "see and be seen." It has quite simply become celebrity central for the international set in South Beach. Our experience

was one to remember. This was an entire evening out. Our server, Stepha Diamond, has been with the place for three years. She is a walking encyclopedia of the menu. More importantly, she gives excellent suggestions of what to order and share.

Virtually every dish at China Grill is prepared on the grill or in a wok, using sauces strictly for flavor. Portions are generous and artfully presented on bold, oversized plates, and meant for sharing. We started off with some fabulous crab cake, salads (cracking calamari and Confucius chicken) lamb spare ribs and regular calamari) and perhaps the best sushi rolls I have tasted in a long time – The Kaleidoscope (salmon, tuna, cream cheese and spicy mango) and crunchy tuna.

Spectacular entrees, large enough for two to three people, include Shanghai lobster with ginger, curry and crispy spinach, Korean kalbi rib eye with truffle artichoke-potato hash, wild mushroom profusion pasta with sake Madeira cream sauce, duck two ways, sweet soy marinated skirt steak, tempura sashimi with hot mustard-champagne sauce, lobster pancakes with wild mushrooms and red chili and coconut milk. A selection of nine popular side dishes includes wasabi mashed potatoes, crispy spinach, and five vegetable fried rice among others. Do not worry about over-ordering. The staff will package any of the leftovers up so you can continue to enjoy the China Grill experience. Save some room for dessert. We recommend the cheesecake pot stickers (with the five spice chocolate raspberry, mango and ping sauce), the Great Wall (vanilla, chocolate and caramel ice cream, toasted meringue, fresh berry and whipped cream) and the hazel nut chocolate torte (blackberry and orange cream and Anglaise sauce).



**China Grill is located at 404 Washington Avenue in Miami Beach, with easy access directly off the MacArthur Causeway from 1-95. Dinner is served Sunday through Thursday from 6 pm to midnight and Friday and Saturday from 6 pm to 1 am. For reservations, call: (305) 534-2211. You can see their entire menu at [www.chinagrillmgt.com](http://www.chinagrillmgt.com) Budget a few hours to really take in the entire experience. The restaurant offers valet parking.**

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