



The Tranquility Pool at the Acqualina.

Highlights of Sunny Isles Beach, Florida

The Acqualina and Il Mulino New York stand out

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

My family and I returned to beautiful Sunny Isles Beach, Florida recently and had the good fortune to spend some time at the Acqualina Resort & Spa. This venue has been awarded one of the highest honours in the hospitality industry, the Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star Award. It is one of 76 hotels to receive this recognition throughout the world and the only hotel and resort on Miami Beach.

The one of a kind Il Mulino New York Restaurant was ranked as an exceptional dining establishment while the Acqualina Spa by ESPA earned top marks as well. We had our first taste of the Piazzetta, a modern marketplace and beachfront Italian restaurant concept which transports guests to a town square set in South Florida Riviera amidst the breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean. The Tuscany-inspired marketplace and beachfront restaurant offers light dining options, bottled wines, olive oils, sauces, caviar, brick oven pizzas, crostinis, paninis, salads, meats, teas and a coffee corner boasting twenty one specialty coffees in a relaxed and inviting setting. Guests and residents get to enjoy the luxurious surroundings of Acqualina's indoor and outdoor spaces while savoring in an assortment of

signature dishes and offerings. Daily specials include roasted marinated chicken and grilled wild tiger shrimp. The menu is curated by Acqualina's executive chef Christopher Blum and Chef Michael Mazza of Il Mulino New York.

At Piazzetta, guests can enjoy dine-in or take-away the finest fresh, prepared and gourmet foods, as well as purchase a variety of merchandise, including Il Mulino's famous pasta sauces. This Italian market also offers a wine corner featuring a wide variety of wines from around world with an emphasis on private vintages. Piazzetta at Acqualina is open to the public Monday to Sunday from 11a.m. to 11 p.m. .

The Acqualina boasts 4.5 beachfront acres with 400 feet of stunning Atlantic coastline, 188 residences, 97 impeccable guestrooms and suites, the 20,000 square-foot ESPA oceanfront spa, oceanfront restaurants, four swimming pools and an innovative marine biology-based children's AcquaMarine program. Next door construction is underway on a brand new complex called The Mansions of Acqualina.

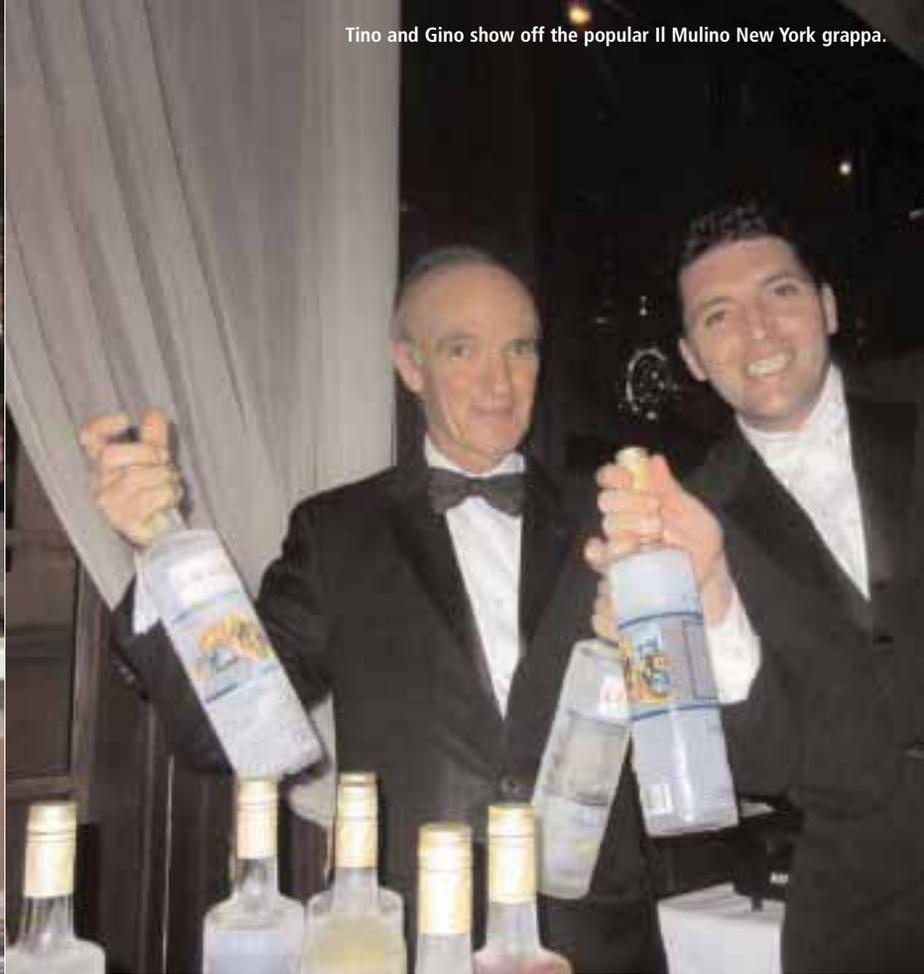
The Acqualina is owned by "the other Trumps." Brothers Jules and Eddie, the sons of a South African tailor known as "Willie," have no financial, philosophical or even familial ties to Donald Trump. Over the years they have quietly built an empire on luxury real estate development, one which includes Williams Island (named after their

dad), an 82-acre posh preserve for the rich in Aventura and Luxuria in Boca Raton, seaside condos that include flat-screen televisions in the bathrooms.

Il Mulino New York (www.ilmulino.com) by far ranks as my number one dining experience anywhere each year. Renowned for its bustling and energetic atmosphere, market fresh daily specials, extensive selection of fine Italian wines and an impeccably polished wait staff, this is one of more than a dozen (and counting) Il Mulino locations. It has already become a much sought-after establishment, frequented by both locals and visitors in the know.

The 110-seat indoor restaurant spreads onto a 24-seat veranda overlooking the ocean. Service here is absolutely spectacular. Experienced Maitre 'D Tino Ponticorvo is there to greet you while regional director of operations Jason Rodriguez is often on site and your contact to book private functions.

The menu draws upon the rustic and hearty Abruzzi region in Italy. From the moment you walk into the establishment, your party is showered with attention as Tino and several servers bring you complimentary antipasto tastings of soppressata, bruschetta, reggiano parmesan, fried zucchini, mussels and garlic/cheese bread sticks. There is such a wide variety of selections to choose from, it is no wonder they have regulars



who come here several times a week. We arrived at 7 p.m. and the place was a bit quiet. Within a half hour there was not an empty seat in the house. Our party began by enjoying the appetizers and ordering some salads and their signature tortellini soup. For the main course, we needed a lot of time to decide. Would it be the veal, some fresh fish, langoustines, pasta, chicken, steak or lamb chops? One person opted for the dover sole, giving a huge thumbs up. Two of us shared the generous portion of lamb chops, accompanied by the best rosemary potatoes I can remember in a long time. Two others feasted on the langoustines, with risotto.

The wine list includes over 200 selections of Italian varieties and guests are offered a complimentary glass of signature house grappa prepared by Tino himself. This year's newest creation was coconut and I must say I found it quite tasty. Also on the dessert menu, the flourless chocolate cake, the cheesecake and the tiramisu are to die for. Ask for the sampler, which includes a tasting of all of their desserts on one tray. Il Mulino New York is right by the main lobby of the Acqualina. There is valet parking. The address is 17780 Collins Avenue. Be sure to make a reservation by calling 305-466-9191. You can view the menu on their website.

The beautiful community of Sunny Isles Beach, known as Florida's Riviera, is located on a barrier island in the northeast corner of Miami-Dade County, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Intracoastal Waterway on the west. Located midway between downtown Miami and

Fort Lauderdale, with easy access to business centers, Sunny Isles also includes entertainment, sports and recreational facilities, and tourist attractions.

Almost one million vacationers visit Sunny Isles Beach annually to enjoy the two and a half mile-long fine sand beach and outdoor amenities such as water sports, boating, fishing, and tennis as well as the abundant shopping, dining and entertainment options nearby. The landmark fishing pier is a local favorite while the beautiful Samson Oceanfront Park provides a children's play area and space to relax; meet friends and enjoy the sunrise. The city is experiencing a major redevelopment renaissance on the east side of Collins Avenue, the main thoroughfare. Zoning laws ensure that view corridors and beach access pathways will always offer residents a life with a view. To the west of Collins Avenue, the City is building parks, improving the infrastructure and laying the groundwork for future redevelopment.

Airport Parking

I have always been among those people who prefers to take his own car to Trudeau International Airport in Dorval rather than cabbing it back and forth. The problem is the daily unaffordable price the airport charges. Enter the Sheraton Airport Montreal Hotel, which has convenient park and stay packages. Here you can relax in their newly renovated guest rooms and avoid the expense of airport parking. Spend the night (for as little as \$144) with them before your trip, then park for up to eight, 15 or 22 days at no additional cost. You can book online (sheratonmontrealairport.com) or

by calling 866-716-8101 end_of_the_skype_highlighting and mentioning promo code SDQ. If you just want to leave you vehicle there, minus the hotel stay, the cost is only \$12.50 per night (taxes included). "This is absolutely a better value," maintains hotel general manager Kevin Gillespie, pointing to superior security with gates and cameras, a price lower than the \$18 to \$23 range at the airport and a complimentary shuttle which runs every 15 minutes.

Gillespie is particularly happy with the global launch of Sheraton Social Hour, a first-of-its-kind, brand-wide premium wine program. It offers guests a specially curated menu of premium wines and weekly tasting events and features 90 plus rated wines by Wine Spectator served in Riedel stemware to ensure that each varietal is presented in the perfect stemware that artfully enhances the wine's flavor and aroma.

Jewelry Exchange

I experienced something new during this trip to Florida – the International Jewelry Exchange on Biscayne Boulevard in Aventura. This well secured venue features an endless array of kiosks with some of the nicest jewelry you have ever seen. The novelty here is that you can shop around for the best quality and price. Our family's search stopped at Station 19 and Jewelry by Marsha (www.jewelrybymarsha.com). Marty Yoskowitz has been in business here for 37 years and by far offers the best deals. You can email him at info@jewelrybymarsha.com.