

michy's

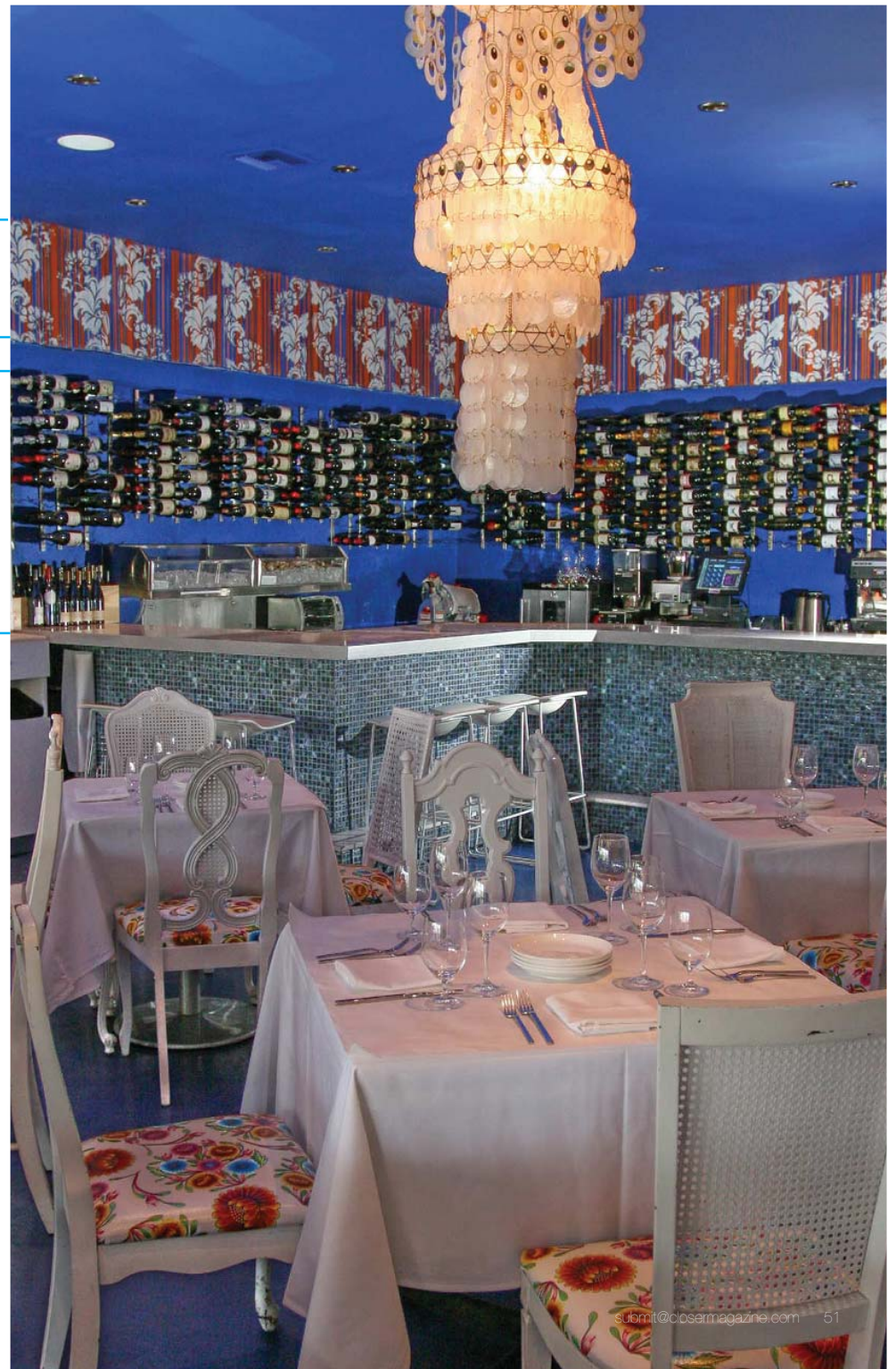
Latin bistro feeds your inner rebel

I have always loved defying convention. When dining out, I have been known to skip the entrées and order dessert instead. I'm not trying to be rebellious; I just want to make the choices that are right for me. At Michy's, they seem to share my credo of individualism, while gleefully refusing to fit into any recognizable category of South Florida restaurants.

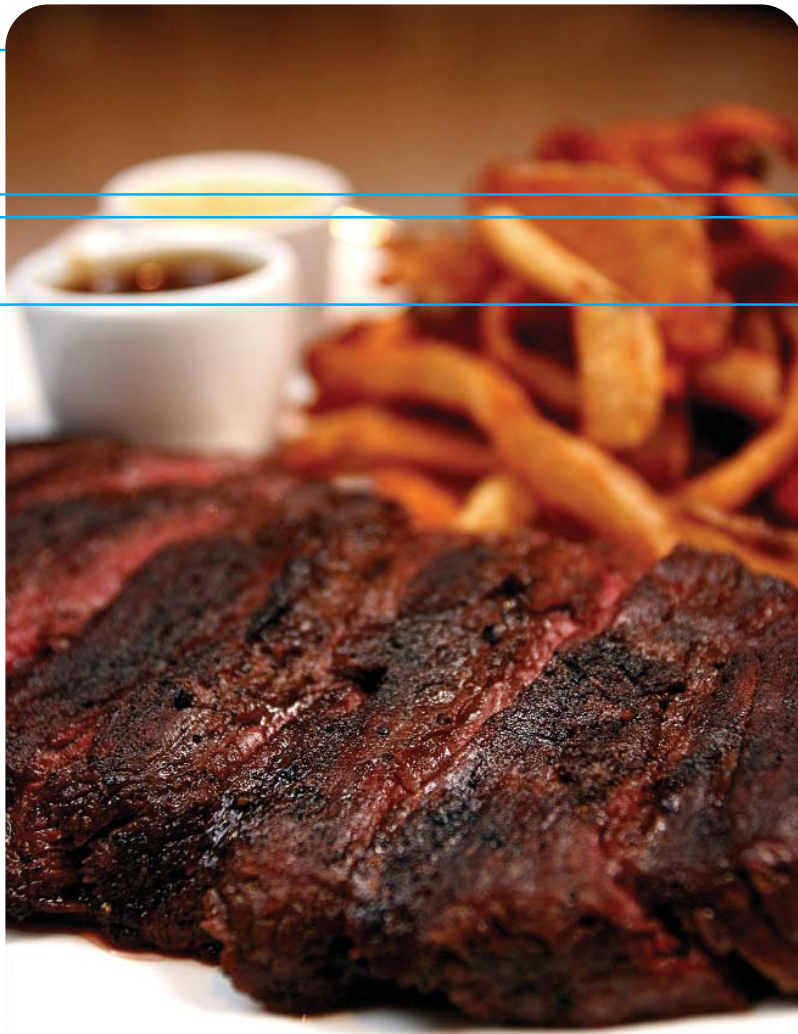
Let's start with style. Michy's is no corporate venture with a color scheme designed by focus group. The cheeky patterns are borrowed from dad's Hawaiian shirt collection, and the decadently long chandeliers layered with iridescent mother-of-pearl chips are pure Miami luxe.

Not surprisingly, the chef behind this bright, swinging 60s dollhouse of a modern Latin bistro is Michelle Bernstein, a woman who has already received national recognition from her tenor at Miami's Azul. The tiny space on Biscayne Blvd. in North Miami is not where you would expect a hot young chef to open her own place, but Michy's has a rebellious streak.

The resistance to conformity pays off in the unconventional menu. Michy's offers both half and full portions of nearly every selection. Some things, like Peruvian Ceviche (\$8-half, \$14-full) can function as a traditional appetizer, while others, like Steak Frite (\$18,



The Steak Frite is my favorite item on the menu, yet it may have the fewest bells and whistles



\$29), feel more like entrées. Customizing a tasting menu of half plates to share, tapas style, is a fun way to taste as many wonderful things as possible for relatively little cash.

To start our parade of dishes, we chose the Ceviche. This perfectly nice preparation might be considered a bit boring if not for the Corn Nuts sprinkled among the finely chopped seafood—that's right, the same Corn Nuts you buy at the gas station on road trips. They added salt, crunch and a hint of nostalgia—these little nubbins were one of my favorite foods back in the third grade.

You have to be a rebel these days to shamelessly consume foie gras in certain settings. As wickedly delicious as bucking social constraints can be, it is even more fun when you are pre-

sented with a velvety portion of slightly salty, slightly gamey duck liver only to realize that Michy's has created the ultimate peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Crusted with honey-roasted peanuts and accompanied by toasted brioche and the chef's version of Welch's grape jelly, this is a clever riff on gourmet comfort food (\$13, \$20).

The Steak Frite is my favorite item on the

request of anyone, from hosts to food runner, they seemed genuinely happy to take care of us right away.

I have a strict policy about restaurant desserts, and here it is: they have to be made in-house and given as much consideration as the thirty-dollar steak. Now that you know where I stand, I can tell you to save room at Michy's. Their Baked Alaska



menu, yet it may have the fewest bells and whistles. What you will get is churrasco, seared on the outside and grilled to a buttery red softness within. You will compulsively dip the tender-crisp fries and the meat alternately into the emulsified Béarnaise sauce and the subtle steak sauce, unable to determine which one is your favorite.

Michy's Paella (\$19, \$34) with snapper and shellfish is cooked in a proper Paella pan slowly enough to develop an addictively crunchy crust of rice with a hint of sweetness. Since we were sharing the dishes, we would have preferred that our waiter had done a better job of staggering their delivery as promised. Still, whenever we made a

(\$8), a 60s novelty, is reinvented with dulce de leche ice cream atop a disk of pistachio cake, all enrobed in an adorable igloo of burnished meringue. The tropical fruit salsa accenting the plate is just for looks, but I can forgive a little vanity. For an unconventionally delicious meal like this, you may have to become a rebel too.

Michy's
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