



■ BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG
Special to the Jewish Exponent



In the magnificent ethnic stew that is Miami, it is said that every time the hemisphere sneezes, the ingredients change.

The mix now includes hefty proportions of Cuban, Nicaraguan, Haitian, Argentine, Dominican, Brazilian... and Jewish, of course.

When I was a youngster, I remember vividly that my aunt and her pals headed south every year, flocking to the newest and what was then considered the glitziest Miami Beach address.

I didn't know much about it, except, to hear her talk, Wolfies and other kosher-style delis were then the preferred places to show off white mink stoles. These places were seriously air-conditioned — back in the times when climatization was a novelty — so all the ladies had to have a "shrug" to cover their tanning shoulders. And what better way to make a statement than with white mink.

The Nicaraguan restaurant Yambo is more like a gallery with food and fruit drinks. Paintings by some of Central America's greatest artists are featured.

Photos by Barbara Ann Rosenberg



Birth of 'Little Havana'

Much later, the first serious hemispheric "aaah-choo" burst forth. Castro came to power in Cuba, and Miami became a haven for people who fled his Communist regime.

So a "Little Havana" was born here, specifically along Eighth Street, known in Spanish as Calle Ocho, and that is how it is now referred to by everybody — Spanish- and non-Spanish-speaking alike.

As the Cubans became more affluent and moved out of the immediate area, the Nicaraguans came in to take their places while the Sandanistas were raising Cain on their home turf. So, while Calle Ocho is still referred to as "Little Havana," there are other parts of town known as "Little Managua."

Without this becoming a history lesson, let us look at the various aspects of "Ethnic Miami" and what there is to do and see there.

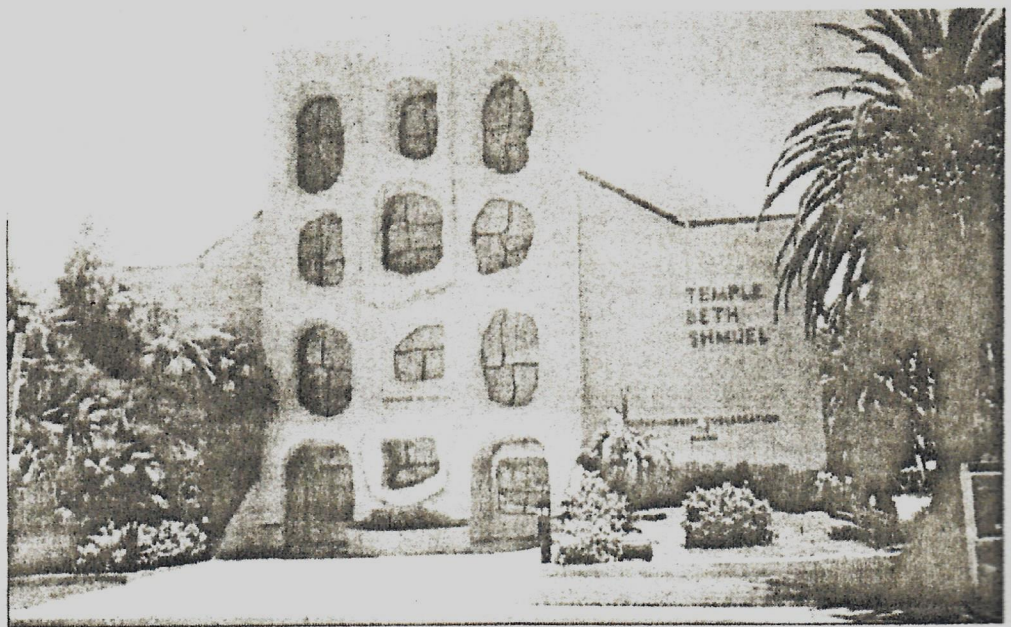
Restaurants and shops of all persuasions sell handicrafts and foodstuffs that make you think you've moved offshore and are going from one country to the next, all without leaving southern Florida.

For a glimpse of the Cuban middle class meeting and greeting each other, you might want to stop at Versailles, a huge diner decorated with the most outrageous crystal chandeliers. You'll probably run into other tourists who come by the busload to gawk at "authentic" Cubans and the food they eat.

There are plenty of music shops along the way, with cassettes and CDs of the enticing music that people used to flock to Cuba for. Some of the clubs, including Centro Vasco, have live music and shows on the weekends. And everywhere, the coffee is as thick, hot and strong as it ever was in Havana!

'Little Managuas'

When you've finished with the Cuban beat and want to savor a touch of the somewhat more re-



strained Nicaraguan culture, you might head for one of the "Little Managuas" that have sprung up in other parts of town.

At Flagler St. and Ronald Reagan Blvd. you'll find *tiendas* (shops) that sell Nicaraguan ingredients and *artanacias* (handicrafts) — all pretty simple, but worth a look.

The Nicaragua Grocery is where recent immigrants flock to get home-style foods and to garner news from other recent arrivals about what is happening back home.

For a more extensive collection of crafts, go about an hour west to Sweetwater, a more-established bastion of the Nicaraguan middle class. There, in a shopping center, called, appropriately enough, Little Managua, there are a few shops selling charming, sophisticated Nicaraguan "primitive" paintings and ceramics.

Other than the steakhouses cropping up in Sweetwater, there's no better place to capture the atmosphere of Central America in general and Nicaragua in particular than Yambo, at 1642 W. First St. in Miami. The part-open-air, part-enclosed restaurant — actually, more of a "happening" — is open for lunch only and serves just about every dish that it's possible to find in the mother country. Not everything is spicy, but you'll find that the cooks are not exactly afraid of using pepper.

The artwork in the dining room of Yambo is worth a stop, even if you don't care to eat. There are huge paintings done by some of Central America's greatest artists. Think of Yambo as a gallery with food and exotic fruit drinks: guayaba, chia con tamarindo, chicha, melon con naranja — all refreshing and delicious.

Hondurans, too

In the same part of the city is a small Honduran community, also showing off its foodstuffs in little groceries and a neat little restaurant that serves all its soups Honduran-style, with rice and tortillas. Cafeteria Adelita is the name, and there are two locations: 2699 Biscayne

Bld. and 3138 N.W. 36th St.

These places are not inexpensive — they're downright cheap! You'll find the main object of decoration is the blue-and-white Honduran flag.

For yet another definition of "ethnic" in Miami, there's "Little Haiti," coming more into its own now that Haiti has been opened up to tourism a bit and it's possible for people to traffic back and forth.

The best place to visit is the Caribbean Marketplace, constructed to approximate the Marche Cluny (Iron Market) that is a famous Port-au-Prince landmark.

There are some decent Haitian paintings and carvings, a few "voodoo" flags and, best of all, a definitely-worth-a-detour little stall by the name of Lakay that serves

Temple Beth Shmuel is one of two major Cuban Jewish synagogues in Miami Beach.

homemade tropical ice creams that have to be tasted to be believed! Unctuous, fruity and pure delicious! The Caribbean Marketplace is at 5927 N. Second St.

Okay, now you've done the "different" ethnic beat. It's time for something a little more familiar, yet quite different from what we know in Philadelphia.

To enjoy and be amused by the "Flintstone"-type architecture of the place, head for Temple Beth Shmuel on Miami Beach. Just off the Art Deco district, it is one of two main synagogues for Miami's 30,000 Cuban-born Jews. ■

