

## South Beach Wine & Food Festival: How It Works With Host Venues Beyond the Beach

The massive food festival now stretches from South Beach to Fort Lauderdale. Here's a look inside the preparation and execution of offsite events, plus a photo roundup from the biggest bash.

**BY TONYA BLOCH**    MARCH 4, 2019

For its 18th edition, the Food Network and Cooking Channel South Beach Wine & Food Festival drew more than 65,000 attendees to more than 100 seated dinners, tasting events, cooking classes, and other programming from February 20 to 24. Known for its beachside tents—the north tent draws as many as 4,000 attendees each night to events like Italian Bites on the Beach and Burger Bash—the festival stretches to venues off the sand as well, as far North as Fort Lauderdale.

"When we have the opportunity to expand into new venues, it brings a new demographic," said festival founder Lee Brian Schragar.

Working with a new host venue begins with a site visit and a conversation, Schragar said, followed by a brainstorm of ideas and finally the planning. "I seldom do we not figure out a way to work with a venue that I've want or wants to be involved," he noted.

**Loews Miami Beach** Hotel has held the title of official host hotel since the festival's start. During the festival, the hotel's occupancy is almost entirely made up of festival VIPs, sponsors, participating chefs, festival staff, visiting media, and guests from around the world who travel to Miami Beach for the event.

"Our partnership is the result of Lee Schragar's vision for a wine and food festival, combined with our brand's Good Neighbor program," said Alex Tonarelli, managing director of Loews Miami Beach Hotel. The program addresses hunger relief, literacy and the arts, and greening initiatives, and it falls in line with the festival's mission to raise money for the FIU School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. "To be a part of the tremendous growth of this festival over the years is something we are very proud of, and we look forward to continuing our partnership for years to come."

Loews Miami Beach hosted six events this year, from the popular Tacos After Dark and Oyster Bash events to the \$500-a-ticket Tribute Dinner, which honored chef Nancy Silverton and Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery owner and C.E.O. Rhonda Carano.

"We get very motivated for the festival each year," Tonarelli said. "Months of planning goes into coordinating each event, from setup to overall operation, to culinary logistics, staffing, and more."

The property also takes advantage of the festival as a marketing opportunity, offering guests a Taco Thursday special leading into the festival, a \$2 oysters all night at Lure Fishbar, and Ferrari-Carano wine specials to celebrate the Tribute Dinner. Additionally, guests were treated to surprise festival-branded welcome amenities, chocolate turnovers, and lobby amenities throughout their festival stays. Burger Bash-theme macarons were a particularly popular treat, he noted.

"The treats and amenities are great visuals that create conversations," Tonarelli said. "Guests love to share them on social media, which helps promote the festival events and showcases our hotel's culinary talent."

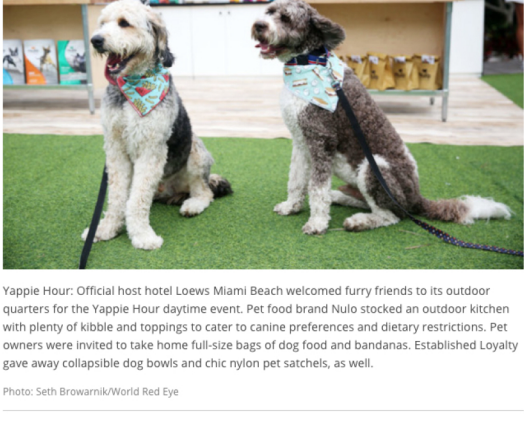
A short walk from the Loews, second-year host venue Espanola Way welcomed the late-night crowd at Midnight Eats, hosted by Bar Lab, Deb Mazar, and Gabriele Corcos. The event allows the 17 vendors of the historic South Beach block to present their fare, while giving guests a taste of the unique charm associated with the iconic district. "Last year's sold-out Midnight Eats event brought international superstars, and we were able to parlay the success into offering other large-scale events with [similar] requested buyouts," said Scott Robins, founder and C.E.O. of Scott Robins Companies and the developer of Espanola Way.

Several Miami Beach hotels host poolside tasting-style events, like the **National Hotel**, which helmed two events: The inaugural Taste Jamaica, followed by Sweets & Beats the next evening. Behind the scenes, this required staff to break down Taste Jamaica, set up the pool guest furniture and restaurant for the daytime, then reset the area for the desert party. "The fact that we can reach two completely different demographics and cater to 600 guests each night demonstrates the versatility of the National Hotel as a venue, and how different we can look one night from the other," said Yaser Mohamad, the hotel's general manager. "Having multiple events also gave us the opportunity to those who missed one night to get acquainted with the venue on the second night."

**Kimpton Surfcomber**, known for its laid-back beach vibe, served as host venue for its fourth Art of Tiki late-night event. "The hotel staff and food and beverage team clears the canvas for the SOBEWFF event team to set the show," said Conrad Tidswell, the hotel's director of food and beverage. Tidswell's team offers onsite to overseeing a seven-pallet ingredient delivery to facilitating the overall two-day preparation of the property's backyard space.

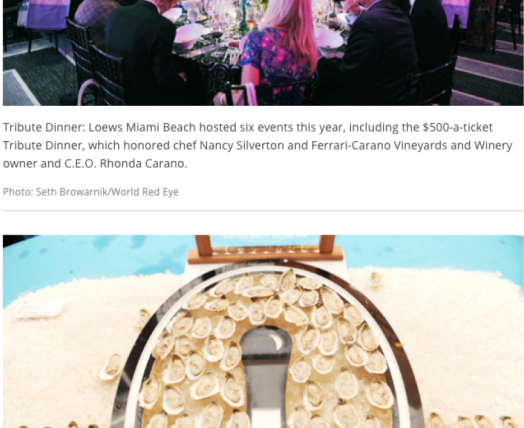
"On the day of the event, we start early with the festival setup on site, showing the mixologists their stations, informing them on what to expect throughout the night, and ensuring they have all of the ingredients they had requested to make their tiki drinks," Tidswell said. "The mixologists arrive around noon on Friday, and work all day to make their drinks in large quantities—enough to satisfy the number of event attendees."

*Click through the side show to see inside festival events as well as activations from brands including Heineken Light, La Croix, Bacardi, and more.*



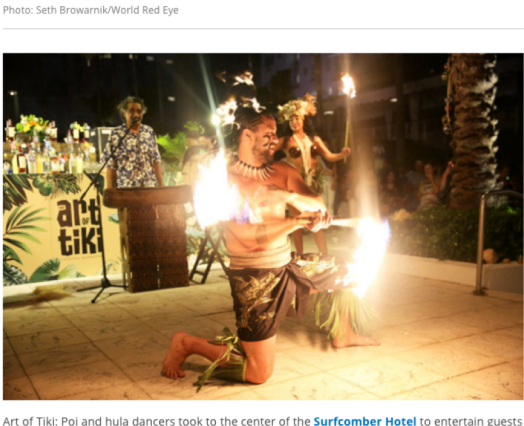
Rose Pool Party: Whispering Angel National Fine Wine Director Paul Chevalier and event host Geoffrey Zakarian uncorked a massive bottle of the famed wine in celebration of the festival's first Rose Pool Party.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



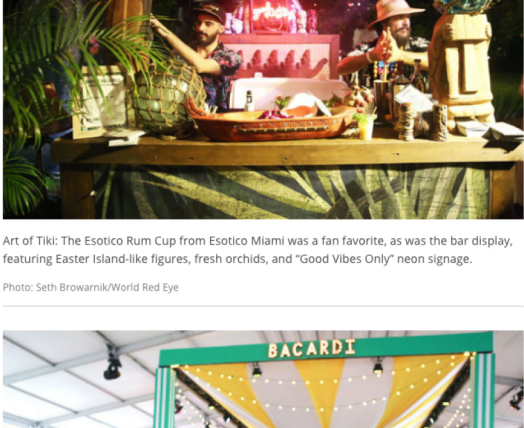
Sweets & Beats: Bon Chocolatier presented a festive array of colorful chocolates at Sweets & Beats, hosted at the National Hotel Saturday night.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



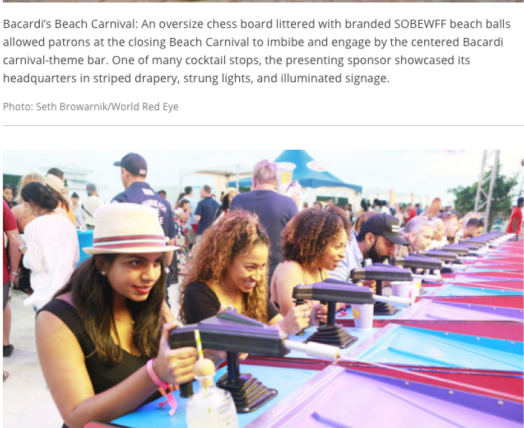
Taste Jamaica: Colin Hytton from Kingston, Jamaica, served passionfruit gelée cubes with jackfruit salsa at Taste Jamaica, a debut event held at the National Hotel.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Yappie Hour: Official host hotel Loews Miami Beach welcomed furry friends to its outdoor quarters for the Yappie Hour daytime event. Pet food brand Nulo stocked an outdoor kitchen with plenty of kibble and toppings to cater to canine preferences and dietary restrictions. Pet owners were invited to take home bags of dog food and bandanas. Established Loyalty diner kicked off the festival and was co-hosted by Donatella Arpaia and P.J. Calappa.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



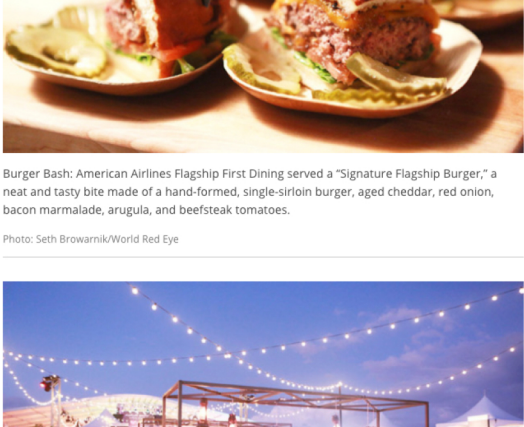
Tribute Dinner: Loews Miami Beach hosted six events this year, including the \$500-a-ticket Tribute Dinner, which honored chef Nancy Silverton and Ferrari-Carano Vineyards and Winery owner and C.E.O. Rhonda Carano.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



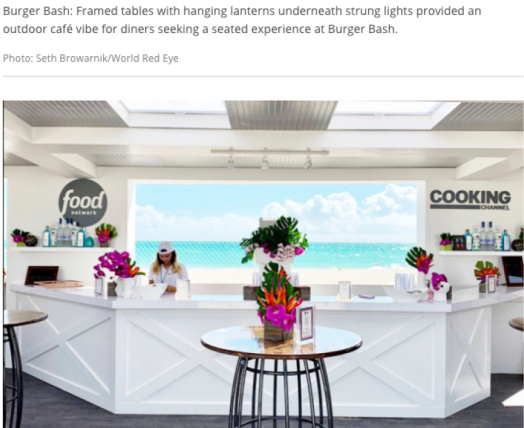
Oyster Bash: Among the purveyors at Oyster Bash were Murder Point Oysters of Baysou La Barre, Alabama.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Art of Tiki: Poi and hula dancers took to the center of the **Surfcomber Hotel** to entertain guests at the Hawaiian-theme Art of Tiki late-night party.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Art of Tiki: The Esotico Rum Cup from Esotico Miami was a fan favorite, as was the bar display, featuring Easter Island-like figures, fresh orchids, and "Good Vibes Only" neon signage.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



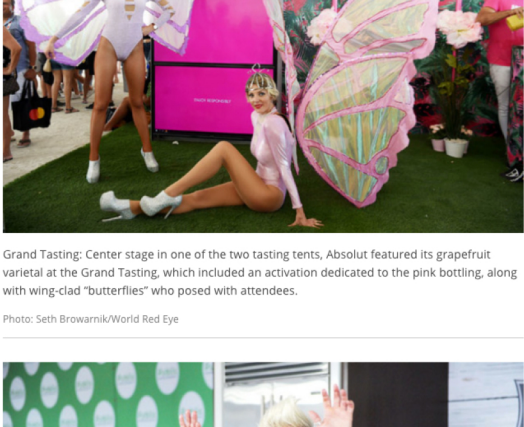
Bacardi's Beach Carnival: An oversize chess board littered with branded SOBEWFF beach balls allowed patrons at the closing Beach Carnival to imbibe and engage by the centered Bacardi carnival-theme bar. One of many cocktail stops, the presenting sponsor showcased its headquarters in striped drapery, string lights, and illuminated signage.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



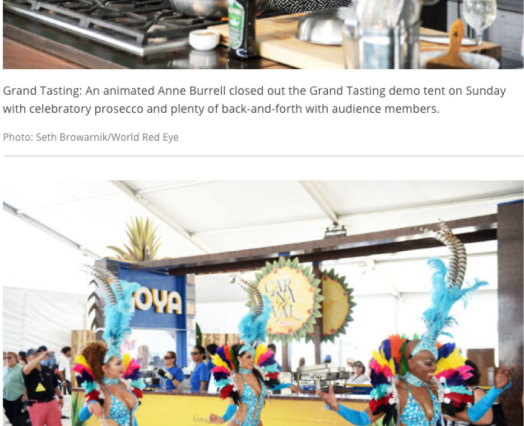
Bacardi's Beach Carnival: Guests at Bacardi's Beach Carnival were invited to sip cocktails from Patron, Grey Goose, and more, while playing free carnival games, like the nostalgic water gun race, where uniformed carnival workers awarded stuffed animal prizes to winners.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



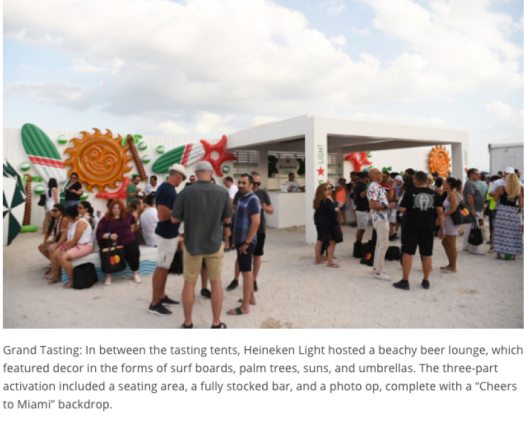
Burger Bash: Judges Neil Patrick Harris and David Burika tasted the People's Choice-winning burger from Nedai Ahmad of Pincho Factory.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



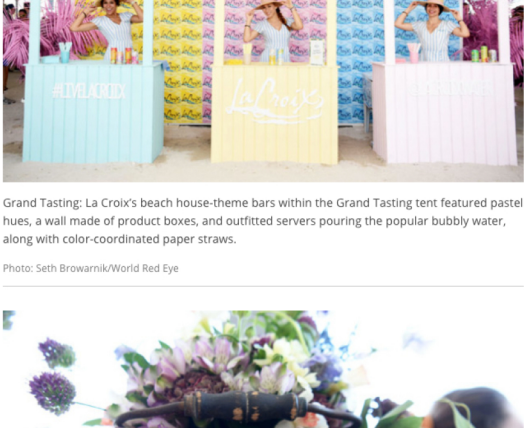
Burger Bash: American Airlines Flightline Dining served a "Signature Flight Burger," a hearty and tasty bite made of a hand-formed, single-ribs burger, aged cheddar, red onion, bacon marmalade, arugula, and beefsteak tomatoes.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Burger Bash: Framed tables with hanging lanterns underneath strung lights provided an outdoor cafe-vibe for diners seeking a seated experience at Burger Bash.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



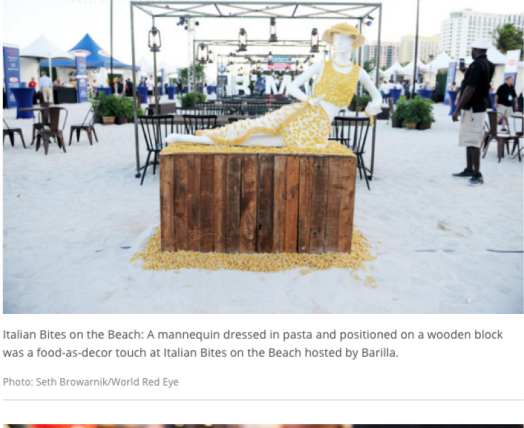
Grand Tasting: **Chad Hudson Events** designed the oceanfront pavilion for **15/40 Productions** sponsors Food Network and Cooking Channel. Scenic production from **Pavilion for Festivals**, furniture rentals came from Event Effects, and **Kitain** provided floral. **Great Performances** handled catering.

Photo: Courtesy of Food Network



Grand Tasting: The space had welcoming details like a swing.

Photo: Courtesy of Food Network



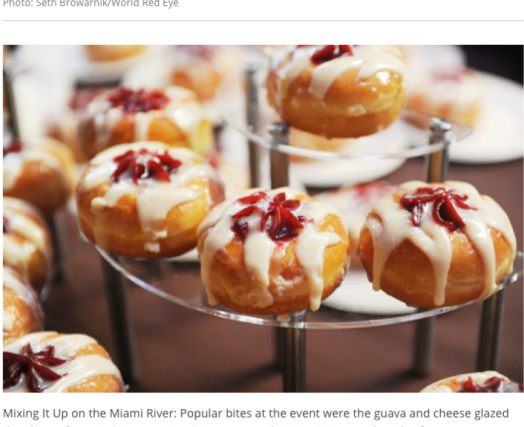
Grand Tasting: Essentia was the official still water sponsor of the Grand Tasting. Along with chilled water bottle coolers stationed throughout the event, the brand activated at the entrance of the village, where a DJ spun beats from atop a two-story "hydrate" structure, and guests had their first shot at a photo booth op with a greenery backdrop that read "Woverachieving H2O."

Photo: Courtesy of Essentia



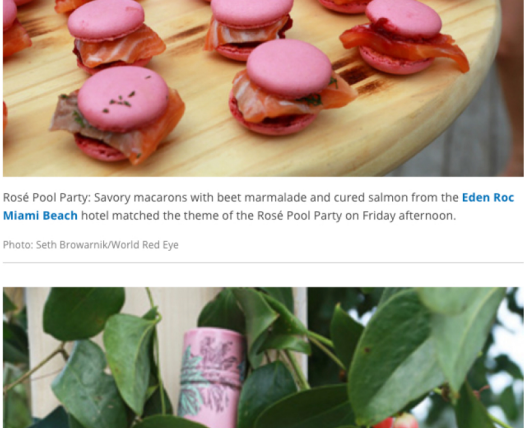
Grand Tasting: Center stage in one of the two tasting tents, Absolut featured its grapefruit varietal at the Grand Tasting, which included an activated Absolut by the pinke bottling, along with wing-clad "butterflies" who posed with attendees.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Grand Tasting: An animated Anne Burrell closed out the Grand Tasting demo tent on Sunday with celebratory prosecco and plenty of back-and-forth with audience members.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



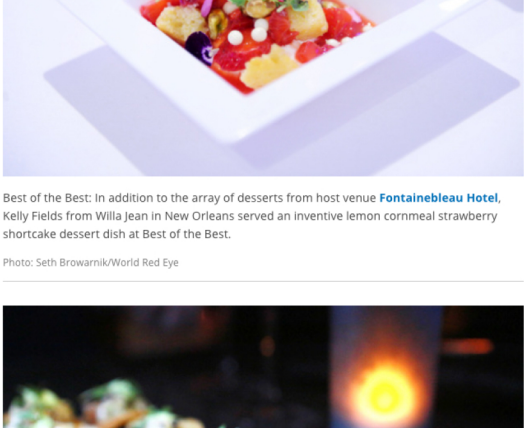
Grand Tasting: The food brand Goya's carnival-theme branding at the Grand Tasting tent featured a whimsical photo booth cutout option, a center staging stand build out, and decked samba dancers.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



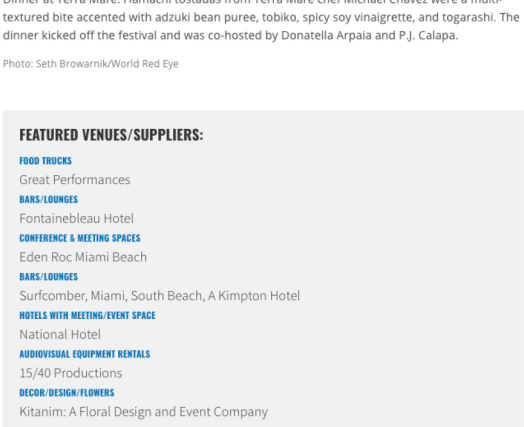
Grand Tasting: In between the tasting tents, Heineken Light hosted a beachy beer lounge, which featured VIPs, sponsors, participating chefs, festival staff, visiting media, and a three-part activation including a seating area, a fully stocked bar, and a photo op, complete with a "Cheers to Miami" backdrop.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Rose Pool Party: Savory macarons with beet marmalade and cured salmon from the **Eden Roc Miami Beach** hotel matched the theme of the Rose Pool Party on Friday afternoon.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Rose Pool Party: Decor at the poolside event at Eden Roc included a wooden frame laced with floral and bottles of the Palm by Whispering Angel.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Best of the Best: In addition to the array of desserts from host venue **Fontainebleau Hotel**, Kelly Fields from Villa Jean in New Orleans served an inventive lemon cornmeal strawberry shortcake dessert dish at Best of the Best.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye



Dinner at Terra Mare: Hachi tostadas from Terra Mare chef Michael Chavez were a multi-textured bite accented with adzuki bean puree, tobitiko, spicy soy vinaigrette, and togarashi. The dinner kicked off the festival and was co-hosted by Donatella Arpaia and P.J. Calappa.

Photo: Seth Brownink/World Red Eye

### FEATURED VENUES/SUPPLIERS:

#### FOOD TRUCKS

Great Performances

#### BAR/SNACKS

Fontainebleau Hotel

#### CONFERENCE & MEETING SPACES

Eden Roc Miami Beach

#### BAR/SNACKS

Surfcomber, Miami, South Beach, A Kimpton Hotel

#### MEETINGS WITH MEETING-EVENT SPACE

National Hotel

#### AUDIOVISUAL EQUIPMENT RENTALS

15/40 Productions

#### BEVERAGE/DESSERT FLOWERS

Kitain: A Floral Design and Event Company

#### EVENT PRODUCTION

Chad Hudson Events

#### WINE DIRECTORY

Loews Miami Beach Hotel