

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Acqualina Resort and Spa on the Beach, Sunny Isles Beach, Florida

The stunning yellow and coral stucco Mediterranean **Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach** is a luxurious oasis situated on 4.5 beachfront acres in [Sunny Isles Beach, Florida](#), just minutes north of [Miami](#), where service and world-class amenities go hand-in-hand. Completing the package and tying it up with a beautiful red bow is 400 feet of white sandy beach dotted with their signature red beach chairs and umbrellas. Ah, La Dolce Vita - the sweet life!

Edward F. Nesta and I stayed at the 97-room (54 rooms and 43 suites) **Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach** in May 2009, three years after it opened in May 2006, and attentive service began the minute that we entered the porte-cochere.

A plethora of prestigious automobiles that included a Bentley, Maserati, Rolls Royce, Maybach, and Mercedes Benz in the parking lot added sophisticated cachet, however it was the Porsche Carrera GT that caught my eye with its sleek sexiness.



**Acqualina Resort Porte Cochere Entrance**

Entering the lobby we immediately noticed the impressive details, the soaring arched ceiling with floral embellishments, six massive alabaster multi-tiered chandeliers accented with gold leaf graced the long rectangular space, the intricate marble mosaic floor, and the terracotta walls with green marble framing the doorways. Red and gold carpets provided visual appeal for the gold and marble rectangular tables that held large floral displays, with intimate sitting areas at either end of the room with sofas placed in front of the tall windows and flanked by red and gold stripe chairs.



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### Front Desk

They say that good things come in threes, of which Acqualina firmly believes and has three outdoor swimming pools and three restaurants. Feeling rather like Goldilocks, Edward and I tried each of the swimming pools, although our preference was the Adults only tranquility pool, where we swam laps, followed by a relaxing session in the Jacuzzi while gazing at the Atlantic Ocean. White tented cabanas placed alongside the perimeter of the pools add to the overall ambience and provide extra privacy.



Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach's three restaurants, **Costa Grill**, **Aria Bar and Lounge**, and **Il Mulino New York** provide for interesting dining diversity for its guests. Costa Grill uses the hotel's prime oceanfront location to offer al fresco dining steps away from the white sandy beach; Il Mulino New York is their fine dining Italian restaurant; and Aria Bar and Lounge is an attractive place to enjoy cocktails, tapas and sushi, and to listen to live music on the weekends.

Aria Bar and Lounge has an interesting selection of signature cocktails on their menu, which of course we had to experience, and after enjoying their Lychee Envy, a luscious libation that combines Stoli Orange Vodka, Stoli Vanilla Vodka, Lychee Puree, and Chambord, we asked Sarah, the bartender if she would share the recipe with us, which she graciously did.



### Lychee Envy

Glassware: Martini Glass

Ingredients for 1 cocktail:

2

Ounces (59 ml)

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Stoli Orange Vodka

1

Ounce (30 ml)

Stoli Vanilla Vodka

1

Ounce (30 ml)

Lychee Puree

0.5

Ounce (15 ml)

Chambord

Method: Chill Martini glass. Add ingredients to a shaker can with ice and shake well. Strain into a Martini glass. Garnish with 2 lychees and an orchid.

**Executive Chef Michele Mazza** is the darling of the restaurant **Il Mulino New York**, whose focus is on Italian cuisine, and the ambience is old-world charm with attentive service by formally attired waiters. Dining at the restaurant is an experience in Italian hospitality that begins with a selection of antipasti and their acclaimed focaccia, and ends with Tino's housemade limoncello and fruit grappas.



### **Il Mulino New York Restaurant at Acqualina Resort**

A few of the many highlights of our dinner included Mushrooms sautéed with wine and garlic and crowned with escargot; Langoustines sautéed in a white wine garlic sauce with porcini and pea risotto; Ossobuco, a veal shank roasted in a red wine sauce with porcini mushrooms and served with saffron risotto; and Tiramisu for dessert.

We stayed in a two-bedroom oceanfront suite that had us ready to move in the minute we entered the opulent marble foyer which featured a round mirror hanging over a half-round marble and metal table accessorized with sculpture, and brushed silver sconces on the wall. To the left of the foyer, there was a spacious guestroom with a king bed with leather headboard, ivory painted walls featured picture frame molding graced with black and white artwork in black frames. Art Deco wood nightstands with tall glass lamps with cream shades flanked either side of the bed, and at the foot of the bed, there was a large plasma television discretely hidden in a leather chest where with the touch of a button the television would rise out of the chest and swivel to face either the bed or the sitting area.

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### **Oceanfront Suite Living Room**

Opposite the bed was a sitting area with a sensually textured wheat colored sofa dressed with a camel and chocolate patterned throw and matching decorative pillows, and two comfortable chairs flanking the oval coffee table laden with a selection of magazines.

Sage floor-to-ceiling window treatments with ecru sheers framed the two large sliding doors that opened onto a large terrace which had two chairs and a small round table where we enjoyed watching the sunset over the Intercoastal waterway, and a spacious wood desk and chair was placed between the sliding doors. Other guestroom amenities included an ample closet with safe, slippers, umbrellas, and an iron and ironing board. A Francis Francis espresso maker and mini-bar rounded out the attention to detail.



### **Oceanfront Suite Terrace**

A large marble bathroom featured double marble vanity sinks, a whirlpool tub, walk-in shower, and enclosed toilet with bidet. Amenities included plush lined robes, a wide selection of ETRO amenities, hairdryer, pedestal vanity/shaving mirror, and even a rubber duck wearing scuba gear with an adorable sign around its neck that read, "No one should bathe alone at Acqualina."

To the right of the foyer, was the rest of the enormous suite, which really captured the hotel's theme of La Dolce Vita, and featured a well-stocked office, living room, guestroom, and a substantial marble bathroom that was so spacious we could have danced the waltz, a kitchen, and a powder room.

The well-lit kitchen featured a bay window overlooking the terrace and the Atlantic Ocean, four wheat colored chairs flanked a round wood table accessorized with an amber art glass rope sculpture, a large cream shade lamp hung directly over the table, six black and white framed botanical illustrations graced the walls, and three wood and metal high backed stools provided a cozy place to perch at the granite counter.

Cherrywood cabinets fully stocked with Emeril cookware, a set of dishes, glassware, a selection of kitchen gadgets in the drawers, and top of the line amenities included a Francis Francis espresso maker, Wolf

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stove, Sub-Zero refrigerator, KitchenAid microwave, and dishwasher completed the residential feel.

On one wall of the living room there was a black and silver mirror hanging over the tufted-back wheat colored sofa which beckoned invitingly with decorative pillows, two chairs accessorized with a camel and chocolate print throw flanking the coffee table laden with a selection of magazines, black round tiered tables with tall black lamps with ivory shades held coral on black stands and a cordless telephone; on the opposite wall there was a large black Panasonic plasma television hung on the wall over a long black cabinet accessorized with topiaries set in black pots on either end. A black star chandelier with ivory shades and a wheat and black stripe area rug placed over the cool beige marble floor tied the room together.

Café au lait and sage floor-to-ceiling window treatments framed the sliding doors leading to the terrace and offered spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean. We enjoyed sitting outside on the terrace at one of the two tables and enjoying an al fresco breakfast where there was an ever evolving tableau of yachts on the tourmaline ocean, the enfolding beach scene dotted with Acqualina's signature red umbrellas and chair, and even spotted a Good Year blimp passing in front of our terrace early one morning.

There was a cozy office that had the feel of a berth on a yacht with its well-dressed built-in daybed with a plethora of decorative wheat and chocolate pillows with photographs of sailboats at either entrance. On the wall opposite the daybed, there were built-in bookshelves with a nice selection of books to read, seashells in clear glass square and rectangular vases, and potted plants. The desk area featured a large Sharp monitor with free WIFI and Internet access, and there was a dark wood chair.



### **Oceanfront Suite Bathroom**

The marble bathroom featured double sinks divided by a low vanity area with upholstered bench and pedestal vanity/shaving mirror, the whirlpool tub had a metal bathtub tray with a selection of ETRO amenities and a rubber Acqualina duck, there was a large walk-in shower with a built-in bench and two types of showerheads, and a separate enclosed toilet with bidet. Other amenities included plush lined robes and a hairdryer.

Just beyond the bathroom, there was an ample walk-in closet with safe, iron and ironing board, and umbrellas, and completing the rest the suite, was the guestroom overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The room featured a king bed with leather headboard, cream walls with picture frame molding, a nubby wheat colored chair with decorative pillow and an ottoman placed in the corner of the room next to the sliding glass doors framed with taupe and celadon window treatments and ecru sheers, that led to the terrace.

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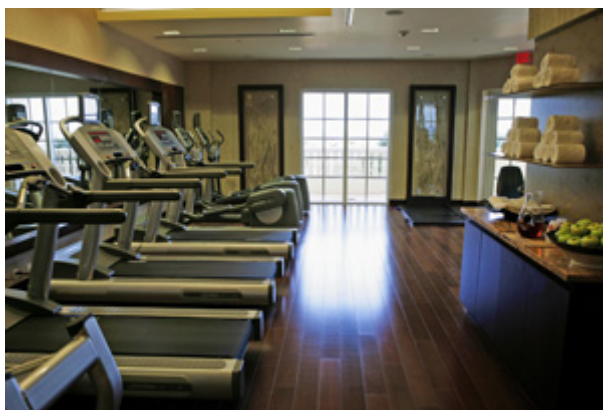
### Oceanfront Suite Bedroom

When we could finally tear ourselves away from our suite and sitting on the terrace, there was much to explore at the hotel, however one of our favorite pastimes was simply strolling the white sandy beach playing in the waves and admiring the many pretty seashells that dotted the shoreline.

Acqualina has many innovative programs including outdoor movie nights, wine tastings, cocktail tastings, and for guests that love to cook, Chef Michele Mazza offers **Adult Cooking Classes** in the privacy of the guest's suite, and a **Kids Cooking Classes** at Il Mulino. Although we would have loved to experience a cooking class, unfortunately there were no classes scheduled during our stay. Classes are held throughout the year, and reservations must be in advance, so plan ahead if you would like to participate in a cooking class.

The hotel's Spa, **ESPA Acqualina** is 20,000 square feet of ultra pampering and features 16 attractive treatment rooms, an outdoor private pool for Spa guests, an outdoor heated jet pool with Roman waterfall, Finnish Saunas, Crystal Steam Rooms, Ice Fountains, Experience Showers, and well-appointed Relaxation Rooms. ESPA offers a varied Spa treatment menu, and during our stay we indulged in therapeutic treatments of Hot Stone massage and Deep Tissue Body massage with Aromatherapy.

The light and airy **Fitness Center** is inviting with state-of-the-art Life Fitness exercise equipment to keep guests looking their best. What I especially appreciated about the Fitness Center is that it is open 24 hours per day, making exercise convenient to my late night exercise workout schedule.



### Fitness Center

Guests traveling with small children will appreciate the family pool and the hotel's **AcquaMarine Program** for children ages 4 - 12, as well as the colorful beach toys, pails, and shovels that the hotel sets up on the beach each morning.

Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach is conveniently located 14 miles from Fort Lauderdale International Airport, 19 miles from Miami International Airport, and by car, 50 minutes from Boca Raton and 90 minutes from Palm Beach. Its close proximity to Miami Beach and South Beach provided us with the perfect base

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from which to explore, and at the end of the day, it was nice to be back in Sunny Isles.



**Aerial View of Acqualina Resort**

Read other articles on **Acqualina Resort & Spa on the Beach** in the **Restaurants, Spas, and Chefs' Recipes** sections where Il Mulino New York Executive Chef Michele Mazza shares a delectable taste of the restaurant.



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Read other articles on **Sunny Isles** and **Miami** in the **Destinations** section.

For more information on Sunny Isles and Miami and upcoming events, please visit **the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau** website: [www.GMCVB.com](http://www.GMCVB.com).

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