



The Return of the Beach Club

A REVITALIZED AND REFRESHED BATH CLUB, MIAMI BEACH'S FIRST PRIVATE BEACH CLUB, PAYS HOMAGE TO ITS JAZZ AGE PAST WITH AN INSPIRED NEW TWIST.

BY JEAN NAVAR

When it opened in 1928, the Bath Club—then the first and only private oceanfront club on Miami Beach—was built by and for people with pedigreed names like F. Ross, Fisher, Vanderbilt, Boies, and Carter. Designed by famed architect Robert A. Taylor in the popular Mediterranean Revival style of the day, it was created as an exclusive winter getaway. Where wealthy Northeasterners could gather to socialize, swim and warm their bones—and neither locals, African Americans nor Jews were allowed access. More than 90 years later, a reincarnated version of the club will reopen this month—again to an elite set of members. But this time around, it will embrace a diverse crowd of every color and creed from every walk of life. The idea, says Don Peebles, the new club's visionary and developer, is to flip the original founders' premise on its head and transform it into a setting that he calls "exclusively inclusive."

In its Roaring Twenties heyday, the Bath Club was an emblem of the Jazz Age, with cocktails flowing and fine food served while an eight-piece orchestra filled the air with music against a boudgavilla-draped tropical backdrop. Several decades later, Peebles, a high-profile South Florida developer, was invited to become the club's first African American member and American member and he bought the property in 1999 after responding

to a request for a proposal to redevelop the property. "The opportunity to own and develop prime oceanfront land in one of the most coveted areas of Miami Beach was certainly a draw, but as a member of the club, I had a personal connection to the project," says Peebles. "I felt as though it was my duty to preserve the club's history while guiding it into its future. For me, it was a chance to make a statement as to how far Miami and the U.S. had come."

And 20 years later, he's done just that. With a complete interior revamp by female design duo Antrobus-Ramirez, the revitalized heritage property pays homage to its glory days with the best of its original architecture—succored walls, cast-iron chandeliers, terra-cotta roof tiles and floors, and Prohibition-era secret doors—restored and left intact. Yet, now filled with a spirited mix of retro-inspired furnishings and accents, including fringed umbrellas, floral-patterned fabrics and canopies, tented cabana ceilings, plush banquettes, cozy leather chairs, rattan beach loungers and bar carts, it also offers a fresh take on old-school Miami glamour that coolly repurposes it for the future. One of the designers' favorite spaces in the 26,000-plus-square-foot facility is the private dining room. "Originally designed to be the jewelry box of the club, the insular room is the perfect place to create an element of surprise," says designer Ruby Ramirez. As in



The courtyard of the newly redesigned Bath Club. Opposite page: A 1980 photograph by Jim Aronson captures the world of beach club privilege.

the past, food, drink and unparalleled service are central to the club's offerings, though today they're now coupled with a new menu of light, healthy fare developed by the acclaimed hospitality group Apici in partnership with Michelin-starred chef Shaun Hergatt will redefine the club's array of dining experiences in the canopied outdoor courtyard and adjacent enclosed lounge as well as the indoor and outdoor dining areas near the pool, with butler service available at the multiple poolside cabanas. Many of the sporting and fitness activities, including swimming and tennis

on the club's refurbished clay courts, also derive from a page in the club's original playbook, yet they're now coupled with a roster of curated fitness programs delivered by the city's top instructors, while customized private massages and skin treatments offer wellness options at the updated spa. And a wide range of events and programming—from film screenings, local artists' exhibitions and music performances to elite members, it will remain ultraexclusive. Membership is offered by invitation only, and limited to just 200 members and 200 members and cannot replicate. ■

IMAGE BY STEVE AMMOND FOR THE BATH CLUB

Members Only

A look at some of the most notable beach clubs—and coming attractions—on Miami Beach

Soho Beach House

A favored stomping ground for creative elites with two pools, a beach bar, club bar, screening room and Cozydine spa and fitness facilities, 4385 Collins Ave., 786.507.9000

Faena Rose

Membership includes a year-round program of cultural experiences and events, as well as access to the Faena Playa beach club, 3201 Collins Ave., 305.534.6800

Turnberry Sky Club

Culinary under construction in the Turnberry Ocean Club, you can expect amenities in the form of a \$100 million Sky Club, and priority access to just about everything in the Turnberry universe, 16501 Collins Ave., 305.933.3000

Miami Beach

Edillon Beach Club

Ion Schriber's supeluxe resort includes a hip, members-only club offering access to spa treatments, fitness classes, two pools and a 70,000-square-foot private beach, 2901 Collins Ave., 786.257.4500

1 Hotel Members-Only

Private Beach Club

In addition to an array of amenities, including the world-famous Spartan Gym and the only Bantam Haydon Spa, members also receive an exclusive private oval cabana, poolside cabana and priority seating, 2341 Collins Ave., 305.624.1000