

HAUTE AMBASSADOR

BURGERS & THE BEACH

JUDGING THE BEST BURGER

BY **ALICIA PIAZZA**

IF YOU ARE A FOODIE, MIAMI BEACH IS THE PLACE TO BE in February in addition to the fact you can hit the beach when many people are plowing snow off their driveways. The city was host to the prestigious Food Network and Cooking Channel South Beach Wine & Food Festival (SOBEWFF), where top chefs clamor to showcase their culinary talents. All the big restaurants, beverage companies and foodie networks set up camp, plus there were media personalities and celebrity chefs galore. It's all about the food, and caring about what kind of spice goes with just the right cut of meat. While they worked, the rest of us benefitted by partaking in the fruits of their labor.

This year, I was honored to be a judge of Rachael Ray's annual "Burger Bash" alongside Natalie Morales from the Today show, Neil Patrick Harris and my hubby, Mike Piazza. Judging the Burger Bash is serious business. There are a lot of contestants, many burgers to taste and many factors going into choosing the ultimate burger such as flavor, bun and meat preparation. What makes this contest unique is that all of the paying attendees are also able to cast a vote for their personal favorite. This creates a lively atmosphere and turns thousands of us into instant "burger experts." Because after all.... potential careers are on the line.

The smell of smoke and charred meats permeated the tent. Who knew there were so many ways to make a delicious burger? It was so much fun to experience such works of art. The amount of creativity and technique that goes into these dishes is mind-blowing, not to mention the difficulty of preparing them for so many people. Furthermore, SOBEWFF had other events over the long weekend such as cooking classes from your favorite celebrity chef to "how to buy organic groceries," as well as many lectures, private dinners and tastings 'til you drop. If you have never been it really is a fun time to experience Miami. The love of food seems to be universal and a language we all speak, and there is something for all tastes. SOBEWFF is a reflection of how our food has evolved over the years with Americans changing the way they buy groceries, cook and dine out. We are becoming more interested in a diversity of cuisines, the ingredients we are consuming and our overall health. What a fun way to learn and take part in the phenomena during an eating and drinking festival on our beloved Miami Beach.



The esteemed judges including the Piazzas, Natalie Morales and Neil Patrick Harris



Mike and Alicia Piazza at the Burger Bash



Morimoto Burger



Burger Bash Winner Jersey Dawg Burger



Prime 112 Burger