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Gabriel Radu takes an order Thursday at Nick's Bar and Grill. The city has allowed the restaurants to expand its dining area onto the Broadwalk on Hollywood Beach.

The power of the patio

Despite summer rains, restaurants moving tables onto sidewalks, streets

BY ROD STAFFORD
HAGWOOD

If dining *al fresco* is your thing, then now is definitely your time. Diners venturing out will find tables stretching onto sidewalks and streets, with tents and umbrellas to protect them from the unpredictable rains and sweltering heat of summer.

Restaurateurs are betting that pent-up desire will draw diners to their expanded outdoor seating, giving them the business they need to survive. But the weather already has been difficult.

"This past week has been treacherous," says Eddie Pozzuoli, managing partner of Prezzo, an Italian pizza

and pasta restaurant in Boca Raton. "Much of our [outdoor] seating is not covered. We have umbrellas, but that is not going to stop the driving rain. It's a little bit difficult ... but we are trying to make the best of the situation."

Prezzo is working with its landlord to expand its outdoor seating, from 80 to a little over 100. "And this morning we were looking at two parallel parking spaces in front," Pozzuoli says.

As quickly as they can, eateries are bumping up table service on patios, decks and parking lots. The goal: to keep tables six feet apart and dining rooms at 50 percent capacity without losing 50 percent of their busi-



JOHN MCCALL/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

Sanitation administrator Tyler Toback disinfects tables on the patio of Prezzo in Boca Raton on Thursday.

ness.

To ease the way, cities from West Palm Beach to Hollywood are closing streets and allowing restaurants to expand onto sidewalks and alleyways.

Restaurants are already looking ahead to further relaxation of the rules.

"The good news is that we expect inside capacity limitations to improve in the coming weeks," predicts Frank Zaffere, a spokesman for Quarterdeck Restaurants. "There is no doubt that many of our cus-

See PATIO, 8A

Hurricane season affecting insurance rates

BY RON HURTIBISE

If you haven't looked at your home insurance policy for awhile, you might be surprised at how much coverage has been snatched away.

The start of hurricane season on June 1 is traditionally a good time for Florida homeowners to review their coverage — both for changes you might not have known about, and to ensure you have enough.

While no one likes paying

for something they hope they never need, this year you'll likely notice you're paying more for less.

That's because state insurance regulators, lawmakers and insurance companies have all worked together to make your coverage less attractive to third-party repair contractors and plaintiffs attorneys eyeing your house as a potential money-spilling piñata.

They're tightening requirements specifically for

older houses with at-risk roofs and plumbing systems.

Roof coverage scaled back

For example, if your roof is over a certain age — as low as 10 years old for some insurers — your policy might not cover the cost to replace it if damaged in a hail storm. You might find that your policy at some point changed from covering the

full replacement cost to what's called Actual Cash Value — what the old roof is worth today.

And that means to replace the roof, the homeowner will be forced to pay whatever the insurance company decides is not its responsibility.

"You don't get a free roof," said Jeff Grady, president and CEO of the Florida Association of Insurance Agents. "The customer has

See RATES, 21A

YOUR NATION, YOUR WORLD

Holiday sees parts of US stir to life

As the Memorial Day weekend starts, many are cautious as confirmed COVID-19 cases pass 1.6 million. 3A

Trump's disconnect with DC widens

A divide between the president and Washington has developed, and the differences have sharpened. 4A

President looks to block probes

Trump won a temporary reprieve last week in keeping Russia investigation info away from lawmakers. 14A

Coronavirus tax breaks off target

Thriving companies getting funds meant to stabilize US economy

BY JASON GARCIA

Corporations across America have booked more than \$7 billion in savings using tax breaks that Congress passed as part of its plan to stabilize the U.S. economy through the coronavirus crisis, according to an Orlando Sentinel review of investor filings.

The corporate tax breaks have steered hundreds of millions of dollars to companies that are thriving during the COVID-19 pandemic — including a drug manufacturer that said the virus boosted its quarterly sales by \$75 million and a company making N95 masks for the federal government. Even the tech platform Grubhub Inc., where orders rose while millions of Americans sheltered in place, scored at least \$6.8 million in savings.

The tax breaks have also rewarded some companies for mistakes they made long before the novel coronavirus emerged. They have helped other companies send more money to their investors through richer dividends and faster

stock buybacks. And in at least one case, the tax savings are passing from a smaller business to a bigger one: The struggling women's clothing retailer Francesca's Holdings Corp. has filed for a \$10.7 million tax refund but will immediately give the money to banking giant J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., according to the terms of a loan agreement between the two companies.

Trinity Industries Inc., which makes freight and tank cars for railroads, expects to get \$303 million in refunds. Wearable-tech company Fitbit Inc. reported a \$145 million tax benefit. Amneal Pharmaceuticals Inc., which makes the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine that has been championed by President Donald Trump, expects a \$110 million refund in the second half of the year.

To be sure, the tax breaks have provided an important cushion for scores of businesses that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and

See BREAKS, 21A

Cruise superfans are eager to set sail again

BY ANDREW BORYGA

Gail Raines, of Royal Palm Beach, has been on over 30 cruises and has no plans to stop. She hasn't been scared by tragic tales of ships stranded at sea while passengers die on board. And she thinks people are overreacting when they compare ships to floating petri dishes.

Raines, 55, is among a loyal contingent of South Florida cruisers who book trips like clockwork each year, rack up rewards and enjoy onboard perks like free champagne. For them, a cruise is not a one-off vacation. It's a way of life. "It's just what we do," she said.

That's a breath of fresh air to Carnival Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line

and Royal Caribbean Cruises, the three largest lines who face an uphill battle to win back trust from passengers and recover from massive revenue shortfalls.

First, they must win over ports, health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, convincing them that setting sail in August will be safe. In recent weeks, the companies have issued statements highlighting their work with experts to develop enhanced safety protocols onboard to protect against the coronavirus.

But few details have been shared publicly about what those protocols will

See CRUISE, 11A

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PATIO

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tomers will likely prefer outdoor seating due to virus concerns. “Without question, patio dining capacity will be critical to restaurant success, not just here in South Florida, but across the country.”

Quarterdeck Restaurants in Fort Lauderdale, Dania Beach, Davie and Sawgrass Mills all have large patio seating areas with shade coverings, fans and placement taking into account prevailing winds. The newest location on 17th Street Causeway in Fort Lauderdale has a fixed roof over an 80-seat outdoor dining area.

At Vinos Wine Bar on Galt Ocean Mile in Fort Lauderdale, manager Erin Fontes says, “Our only fear is rain that is affected by wind, which is common, especially in this current season. So it will be a matter of navigating pros and cons and maneuvering through changes day to day.”

But, she says, “We aren’t a company who is willing to risk lives by breaking any rules, so the outside seating will absolutely be vital.” Vinos has other locations on Las Olas Boulevard (in the process of moving across the street), Coconut Grove and Key West as well as the Hotsy-Totsy Bar and Grill in Hollywood.

Jean D’Eire, of the cozy Le Patio Wilton Manors with 10 seats inside and 21 outside, says that she and her chef/wife/co-owner Vero Leroux considered spacing out the patio seating by removing a table. They even thought about Plexiglas divisions.

“We were thinking of going to expand into the car park,” D’Eire says. “But it’s the end of May. Next week is the first of June. So it’s off-season, it’s ... hot and humid and raining this time of year. And business is going to be slow this time of year. Do we need to make any changes or not? It’s summertime, so it’s slower than it usually is [during season]. We are ac-



Zsafia Szepesi serves drinks to customers Thursday at Nick’s Bar and Grill in an expanded dining area on the Broadwalk on Hollywood Beach.

tually running 50 percent capacity anyway.”

Todd Herbst, co-owner of Big Time Restaurant Group (with dining brands in West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Boca Raton, Fort Lauderdale, Palm Beach Gardens), summed up how they will deal with the weather: “Where we don’t have tents or awnings, pray.”

Plus-size patios pay off

Restaurants that already have outdoor seating have an advantage.

“We have two and half months of profits that we lost and at the same time we’ve got to create a safe place for our guests. It’s definitely essential. For those establishments that do not have an outdoor seating area, I feel for them. Twenty-five or 50 percent ... is going to really take a toll on



Cafe tables are now allowed to spill farther out on the Hollywood Beach Broadwalk.

any business,” says Sean Kelly, general manager of C.W.S. Bar and Kitchen in Lake Worth.

C.W.S. has two patios, one on the west side of the gastropub with a barbecue grill and a larger patio on the east

side with a bar, seating and a stage. Kelly says that before the coronavirus lockdown they were already in the process of expanding their patio, commandeering their parking lot and possibly getting two large shipping con-

tainers, one for storage and the other to be converted into an outdoor bar.

“We moved some of the tables to maximize our occupancy,” Kelly adds. “We took our stage out temporarily. The front seating areas, what we call the stadium, we will utilize for live entertainment focusing on solo and duo artists until we are confident that we can safely have full bands back on our programming.”

C.W.S. is part of the Damn Good Hospitality group, which includes Revolution Live, Stache Drinking Den and Coffee Bar, Green Bar and Kitchen and America’s Backyard.

Scott Frielich, vice president of Sub-Culture Restaurant and Nightclub Group, with 14 businesses from Jupiter to Miami Beach, says, “In just the short time we’ve been able to open, we’ve noticed that our locations with outdoor seating are doing much better than those without that seating. You know, people here they like being in the fresh air. They like that a lot.”

Sub-Culture’s Dubliner Irish Pub and Kapow Noodle Bar in Mizner Park have been helped by the city of Boca Raton’s closure of one lane of traffic so that eateries can add tables. “It is definitely crucial for us,” Frielich says.

Burt Rapoport, president of the Rapoport Restaurant Group, with four properties in Boca Raton and Delray Beach, says they added 12 tables to their pre-pandemic sidewalk seating at the popular bistro Max’s Grille in Mizner Park.

“The way it works is there are barricades down the middle of the street running north and south,” explains Rapoport. “It used to be an area where two cars could get by and now it’s one. One of the lanes is for seating and one of the lanes

is for emergency vehicles. So, we have part of the space from in front of the [parking] valet stand to our property line.”

Delray Beach’s Johnnie Browns — with expansive seating in front and back — just reopened under new management and already they confirm that patios are a big part of the future.

“Since our reopening this Monday, we’ve seen an immediate positive response from the public to this and we know that our covered, open-air seating will continue to play a critical role with our guests and our business moving forward,” says managing partner Craig O’Keefe. “Margins are tighter now more than ever with social distancing measures in place, so all available seating square footage at any restaurant helps.”

Clearing the path (and sidewalks, streets and lots) for restaurants

As with Mizner Park, some cities in Broward and Palm Beach counties are rolling back restrictions for tables on sidewalks, and a few are even closing streets to allow restaurateurs to spread out even farther.

■ **Delray Beach** will temporarily allow dining and retail businesses to expand outdoors as well as existing sidewalk usage. “Our main intent is to create these pop-up patios,” says Laura Simon, executive director of the Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority. She says they are considering reducing Atlantic Avenue to one lane on certain nights, “on an off-night, like a Wednesday evening, but not something where it’s closed all the time.” Delray-BeachFL.gov.

■ **Boca Raton** has relaxed some codes, allowing restaurants to apply for permission to spread out, temporarily, according to the city’s website. Brandon Schaad, development services director, explains, “This is a program established by the city administration to help restaurants temporarily expand outdoor seating while indoor capacity reductions are in place, and to provide a safer alternative to indoor dining.” MyBoca.us.

■ **West Palm Beach** is about to enact a “Dining on the Spot” initiative that will allow café seating to extend onto downtown streets, parking lots and alleyways. This will be particularly helpful on the dining/drinking/shopping enclave of Clematis Street, which has several blocks of lane closures due to major streetscape construction project. DowntownWPB.com.

■ **Hollywood** has launched a Temporary Café Zone Expansion Program that allows restaurants to expand dining areas along the beach’s Broadwalk, in downtown Hollywood and adjacent to established restaurants city-wide. HollywoodFL.org.

■ **In Fort Lauderdale, Galt Ocean Mile** businesses are petitioning city commissioners for parking lots and side streets to partially shut down so restaurants and eventually bars can extend outdoor seating, according to Cathy Vassallo, president of the North Beach Restaurants and Shoppes group. “We are asking after regular business hours, say five or six at night, possibly looking into [extending tables and service] out into the street and make it into a sort of piazza, like in Europe,” says Vassallo, who owns Fish-tales Restaurant and Nightclub. “We didn’t want interfere with everyone’s business during the day.” NoBe-Places.com.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Associated Press

On May 24, 1775, John Hancock was unanimously elected President of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

In 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message “What hath God wrought” as he formally opened America’s first telegraph line.

In 1935, the first Major League Baseball game to be

played at night took place at Cincinnati’s Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

In 1974, American jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington, 75, died in New York.

In 1976, Britain and France opened transatlantic Concorde supersonic transport service to Washington.

In 1994, four Islamic fundamentalists convicted of bombing New York’s World Trade Center in 1993 were each sentenced to 240 years in prison.