At a glance, Miami Beach’s Icebox Cafe, with its long glass counters crowded with confections, resembles a pastry shop. Which, briefly, it was. In March 1999, when Robert Siegmann, a former New York caterer who cooked for Martha Stewart, was settling into his warmed-up industrial space, he could do only so much in a typical 18-hour workday, and he didn’t want to let his ambitions surpass his expertise. So instead of offering a menu of made-to-order items, he emphasized what he loved: home-style desserts such as his rich yet delicate cinnamon butter cake.

As Siegmann’s confidence grew, his cafe evolved from a simple brunch-
Pumpernickel Waffles
MAKES 20 FOUR-INCH WAFFLES
Mashed potatoes in the batter give these waffles a soft, chewy texture. For a delicious brunch, top them with sliced smoked salmon, poached eggs and chives. The waffle batter should be made a day ahead, so plan accordingly.
3 cups whole milk
1/4 cup yellow cornmeal
1/4 cup unsulphured molasses
1/2 ounce unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped
2 teaspoons finely chopped caraway seeds
1 teaspoon salt
3 large egg yolks, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon active dry yeast
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
3/4 cup rye flour
1 cup mashed potatoes, at room temperature
1 stick (4 ounces) unsalted butter, melted
3 large egg whites
2 tablespoons sugar

1. In a medium saucepan, warm the milk over moderately high heat until bubbles appear around the edge. Remove from the heat and stir in the cornmeal, molasses, chocolate, caraway seeds

Siegmann, the owner of the Icebox Cafe, where offbeat brunches include pumpernickel waffles topped with salmon, eggs and chives.

lunch place into the storefront restaurant he had wanted to open since he was a pastry-obsessed boy, creating desserts for the parties his parents threw in their Mexico City home. Word spread through the South Beach neighborhood of the nice little hangout with the comforting retro feel and the wacky three-tier cakes oozing with frosting. “We do some really outrageous stuff,” Siegmann says, referring to his impressive chocolate log with chocolate and vanilla ice cream and peanut butter.

Siegmann’s ice cream cakes and pastry chef Lawrence Anzivino’s sweets are a major draw, and the changing menu keeps the hard bodies of South Beach coming back for chef James Heltsley’s dinners. But only those who eat at midday on Saturday and Sunday can sample Anzivino’s offbeat versions of brunch