

OWL EYES
During a tour and tasting (\$30) at Blinking Owl Distillery, guests can try cocktails like the Pink Moon, crafted with vodka, orange, aquavit, lemon, falernum and Angostura bitters.



A YEAR OF CHEER

We felt the spirit of the sip last year, thanks to **Blinking Owl Distillery** (blinkingowldistillery.com). Run by drink duo Robin (who moonlighted as the designer) and Brian Christenson, and partner Kirsten Vangsness (of *Criminal Minds*), it's the first craft distillery in O.C. and will add a Norwegian-style aged aquavit (\$50) to its list of vodka, orange vodka, aquavit, gin and more come spring. Then there's award-winning newbie **Ironwood Cellar.Craft.Cook** (ironwoodlagunahills.com), where mixologist Gabe Whorley has his I'll Card-a-Mom (\$12). It'll freshen your taste buds—particularly when paired with Executive Chef Jared Cook's duck breast with seared foie gras (\$31). A toast!

FRENCH TWIST
Amelia's chopped salad (\$14) at Marché Moderne's new Crystal Cove restaurant



JAMMIN'

The former marmalade factory now known as the **MAKE** (anaheimpackingdistrict.com) will serve up its grand debut in 2017—this after opening Jav's Barbecue and Pali Wine Co. early this year, and Unsung Brewery last summer. It's the work of Shaheen Sadeghi, who says the hang will toast local tastemakers. Speaking of, chef-owners Florent and Amelia Marneau will make good on their plan (announced in the fall) to move **Marché Moderne** (marchemoderne.net) to Crystal Cove Shopping Center this spring (after a decade at SCP). But Francophiles can still savor the classics—by the shore.

READERS' CHOICE FAVORITE RESTAURANTS & CHEFS

Want to know where the region's gastronomes go to dine? Here's a taste from the top toques at the finest eateries around.



IN THE ROUND
The grilled octopus (\$19) is on the seafood bar menu at AVEO.

1 AVEO Table + Bar

Unveiled as part of Monarch Beach Resort's revamp, the eatery has become a fave, thanks to Executive Chef Collin Thornton's knack for crafting clean dishes with local seasonal bounty. monarchbeachresort.com

2 The Resort at Pelican Hill

Marco Criscuolo rose to executive sous-chef for the resort after two years at Andrea's helm, proving his flair for Italian fare. Now, he's working with all the restaurant head chefs on their Valentine's menus. Amore!pelicanhill.com

3 Haven Gastropub

It's no wonder why the pub and its warm, welcoming Executive Chef Greg Daniels are on the list. Since opening in 2009, the haunt has churned out flavor-packed comfort food (love those deviled eggs). Just like home. havengastropub.com

THE DRIFTER

When popular Laguna chef **Rainer Schwarz** decided to open a third restaurant, he and partners John Nye and Colby Durnin searched the coast from L.A. to San Diego. Then they stumbled onto the perfect location, almost in his backyard, on Golden Lantern in Laguna Niguel. "I could walk; it's so close," he says. A plus: Many of his new customers will be his own neighbors, "so I know what they'll want to eat." That means the menu will be more varied at the new Hendrix—which will open in February—than at their other two seafood-focused locations in Laguna Beach: Driftwood Kitchen and The Deck. Diners will walk in seeing a rotisserie in action: steak or chicken or lamb. Seafood will still be offered, but so will American staples and cultural specialties. "You'll see a lot of things like... whole-roasted foods," he says. There's a wine store and a beer tap with rotating labels each month. Hendrix won't be on the water like the other spots (it's located in Ocean Ranch Village). But it will have a view of the sea. "My customers have to have that," he says. Why the name Hendrix? It's not for Jimmy Hendrix. Schwarz says they wanted a name that shows strength. (It's also a play on Hendrix's Gin.) It will be the largest of their three eateries—seating for 182, while the others hold less than 100 each. But Schwarz isn't worried: Laguna Niguel has only one other major restaurant. Schwarz knows the city's eager for a new option. While operating three restaurants may seem daunting, Schwarz is keeping his cool. The first few months he will concentrate on Hendrix and let the partners keep the others going. His specialty is the kitchen; the partners operate out front. A native of Austria, Schwarz worked all over Europe until he met a mentor who brought him to the United States. Stops in Cali and Colorado boosted his reputation. But a job as executive chef at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood led him to Nye and Durnin. And the future is bright for the trio. "We're humble; we have to work hard," says Schwarz. "But we don't have dollar signs in front of us. Maybe there will be other restaurants, but we want to make Hendrix something my neighbors will love." driftwoodkitchen.com; deckonlaguna.com

BLINKING OWL DISTILLERY PHOTO BY KENNARD PHOTOGRAPHY; MARCHÉ MODERNE PHOTO BY MICHELLE LASSON/THE LASSON GROUP; AVEO TABLE + BAR PHOTO BY JOHN DOLE

PROMOTION about town

8th Annual Girls Night Out

September 29, 2016
Laguna Beach, CA

The 8th Annual Girls Night Out was a sold-out affair with more than 300 women attending. This year's event was presented by Wilson Automotive Group, Montage Laguna Beach, Newport Lexus, Starfish, and Winston's Crown Jewelers who donated an amazing 19.64 Carat Cabochon Australian Fire Opal and custom design. Chaired by Club President, Paula Arnold, Girls' Night Out raised \$100,000 in direct support of the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach. The Club relies on support from the community to serve over 2,000 children each year and would like to give a big thanks to Holly Wilson for another fabulous event.

Photography by Corey Sandler



Homeowner Holly Wilson and Chairwoman Paula Arnold



Charity Morsey and Kerry Morsey



Beth Healy, Marcela Owen, Maria Lupita, Suriya Mastroberti



An aerial view of the gorgeous patio setup



Co-Chairs Anne Warrington and Danielle Allison



Don Thompson and Damon Shelly



Bill & Nancy Thompson and Ann & Aidan Raney



Auctioneer Andrew Bost

Hope & Help Gala

September 10, 2016
Newport Beach, CA

The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders hosted its second annual Hope & Help Gala on September 10 at The Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach to raise awareness for those living with autism spectrum and other neurodevelopmental disorders. This event raised more than \$512,000 to benefit the children and young adults of The Center through maintenance and expansion of clinical services, education and training, and clinical research programs. Co-hosted by Danielle Allison and Anne Warrington, the program for the evening included dinner, a high-energy live auction and live inspirational stories about how The Center is making a difference in the lives of families throughout Orange County.

Photography by Xuong Do, Happy Photos

John Forsythe and Cathy Brock



FOOD & DRINK

guide

Center Drive, Newport Beach, 949.720.9633, flemingssteakhouse.com \$\$\$

Fly-N-Fish Oyster Bar & Grill Visitors to Newport should consider this sandy-chic locals' hang a gift from the shore, thanks to its handshucked oysters (and their raspberry mignonette), steamers and saffron bacon risotto with pan-seared scallops. Splashy! Lunch and dinner daily. 2304 W. Oceanfront, Newport Beach, 949.673.8400, flynfishoysterbar.com \$\$

Gratitude There's much to appreciate in Orange County's culinary scene, such as a restaurant that defies the norm and sends out full-flavored cuisine packed with healthful ingredients—and is solely plant-based. No, meat's not on the menu here, but that won't matter once you try chef Dreux Ellis' coconut and summer squash ceviche. The cocktails are stellar too—thanks to the work of Bev Director Jason Eisner and his team, who can concoct drinks for your every whim, in addition to menu musts like the Lemon Drop. It's safe to say resolutions won't be broken here. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. 167 Westcliff Drive, Newport Beach, 949.386.8100, cafegratitude.com \$\$

Juliette Kitchen + Bar Yes, the food is elegant and elevated (Daniel Hyatt is the man to thank for that), but the wine and cocktail menus are also stellar (co-owner and Beverage Director John Hughes knows his stuff). And the staff? Impressive.

Just ask one of the regulars who sits barside: The servers and mixologists know the regulars by name—and often remember what they ordered last too. Lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner Mon.-Sat. Closed Sun. 1000 Bristol St. N., Ste. 11, Newport Beach, 949.752.5854, juliettenb.com \$\$\$

Mastro's Ocean Club From the Maybach- and Lambo-sprinkled valet area to the fresh-caught seafood and handcut steaks, everything at Mastro's is large and in charge. Get your seafood fix (the gargantuan seafood tower is a must) before you go barside to sip a Jack the Buddha cocktail with the uberfabulous of O.C. Dinner nightly. 8112 E. Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.376.6990, mastrorestaurants.com \$\$\$

Pelican Grill Take your pick of views aplenty at this seaside eatery tucked inside the Pelican Hill Golf Club: massive flat-screens at the bar for sporty types, a display kitchen or sweeping Western Pacific sunsets. Enjoy live music Thu.-Sat. Lunch and dinner daily. The Resort at Pelican Hill, 22701 S. Pelican Hill Road, Newport Coast, 855.467.6800, pelicangrillnh.com \$\$\$

Pirozzi Corona del Mar Alessandro Pirozzi's concept is always filled with his avid fans and Italian foodies. There's an imported wood-burning oven handcrafted by artisans in Naples, 900-degree baked prime beef and, of course, a prosciutto and mozzarella bar. Now that's amore. Dinner nightly. 2929

E. Coast Highway, Corona del Mar, 949.675.2932, pirozziadm.com \$\$

Provenance Cathy Pavlos' second dining concept is enticing Newport denizens with its rustic-chic flair. The beloved local chef's menu is inspired by Cali's Wine Country, changes with the seasons and incorporates produce from its on-site organic garden. (Now that's fresh!) Lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner daily, brunch Sun. Eastbluff Village Center, 2531 Eastbluff Drive, Newport Beach, 949.718.0477, provenanceoc.com \$\$\$

Roy's You can always count on chef Roy Yamaguchi's scrumptious Hawaiian cuisine, which incorporates French and Asian influences. At the N.B. location, chef John Vega's classic roasted, macadamia nut-crusted mahimahi is enough to make you a regular. Dinner nightly. Fashion Island, 453 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, 949.640.7697, roysrestaurant.com \$\$\$

SideDoor Look for the larger-than-life red key over the entrance of this Old World-themed gastropub connected to Five Crowns. Specializing in seasonal small plates meant for sharing and a menu that changes almost weekly, the resto also features a staff well-versed in the accolades of its many craft beers, specialty cheeses and charcuterie. The best part? You can enjoy all of it on the quaint outdoor greenhouse patio, open Sun.-Fri. Dinner nightly, brunch

Sun. 3801 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Corona del Mar, 949.717.4322, sidedoorcdm.com \$

Sol Cocina This hot restaurant and bar concept comes courtesy of Executive Chef Deborah Schneider, whose innovative interpretations of traditional coastal Mexican cuisine are always crowd-pleasers. Her *canarditas* duck taco gives new meaning to street food—it's a deep-fried duck-leg confit, after all—and we can't get out of here without an order of her Naked Guacamole. (We like it so much, we've been known to re-create her recipe at home.) *Delicioso!* Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sat. and Sun. 251 W. Pacific Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.675.9800, solcocina.com \$\$

Sushi Roku Fashion Island is a fresh-food destination, no matter what you're craving. Take Innovative Dining Group's hip yet serene sushi haunt. For a light but flavor-packed palate pleaser, try the fluke kumquat sashimi. Its interplay of sweet, tangy and salty satisfies the senses (without the guilt). Oh, and the *hanabi*, with its helping of spicy tuna on crispy rice, is good for even the most tentative diners, while the Thursday night offering of half-off all bottles of sake and wine quenches everyone's thirst. Lunch and dinner daily. Fashion Island, 327 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, 949.706.3622, sushiroku.com \$\$

Ten Asian Bistro A visit to this lively concept

will serve you up an example of why "Sushi" Dave Fernandez is a man on a roll; his Tuna Lovers concoction with peppercorn ahi avocado makes our heads spin. A tip: Make sure to order his signature jalapeno sauce. It's a perfect 10. Lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner Mon.-Sat., closed Sun. 4647 MacArthur Blvd., Newport Beach, 949.660.1010, tenoc.com \$\$\$

Waterline Nautical decor touches—navy-blue and bone colorings, and furniture with espresso finishes—meet a seafood-focused menu from Executive Chef Rachel Haggstrom. It's the epitome of O.C.'s coast (so out-of-towners will want to join locals and make a reso here). A bit of advice: Start with the house roll; the plump pieces of lobster will whet your palate for the ocean of eats to come. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. 1221 W. Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.630.4390, balboaayresort.com \$\$\$

The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar The toasts keep coming for "The Boyz" (Executive Chef and partner Yvon Goetz, sommelier and partner William Lewis and founding partner JC Clow) behind this local favorite here (and in Tustin). The menu of contemporary Cali cuisine is a perfect fit for the abundant vino selection, and the landmark waterfront location mixes SoCal sophistication with Napa style. And it's buzzing from the moment it opens (Sunday brunch brings luscious white shrimp

SOCIAL SCENE



Classical Opening Night Celebration at The Westin SCP

1] Pretty pianist Olga Kerns takes a bow after performing Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini" with the Pacific Symphony.

2] Anne and Danny Shih are the epitome of elegance.



3] Trumpeters hail the night's lineup, which fetes the symphony's 10th anniversary in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall.

4] Ernie and Donna Schroeder are just two of the 210 aural enthusiasts in attendance.

Crystal Cove Alliance Soiree at the Bluffs

7] Founder and VP Laura Davick, board member Ralph Grippo and recently appointed President and CEO Alix Hobbs flash sunny smiles.

8] Christyne Olson enjoys the reception, then sits down to a farm-to-table dinner with 420 beach buffs. It's a new element of the eve (courtesy of The Resort at Pelican Hill) and dishes out a beef filet with butter-poached Maine lobster.



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“Nowhere else along the California coast is there a place where history and architecture meet open space with majestic ocean views and a bountiful underwater park.” –PRESIDENT AND CEO ALIX HOBBS AT THE CRYSTAL COVE ALLIANCE SOIREE

Toast to the Casa at Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens

5] The terrace affords a sunset view of the sparkling Pacific.

6] Debora and Gary Wondercheck join 300 masqueraders for everything from an opera recital by Amanda Squitieri (delivered from a gondola) to bidding. A surprise offering: a book about San Clemente's history that brings in nearly \$2,500.



CLASSICAL OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION PHOTOS BY NICK KOON PHOTOGRAPHY; TOAST TO THE CASA PHOTOS BY OUR STORY; CRYSTAL COVE ALLIANCE SOIREE PHOTOS BY J. CHRISTOPHER LAUNI PHOTOGRAPHY