



**s onnhalter**  
Not Afraid To Get Our Hands Dirty™

# Insider's Guide to SAN DIEGO

**Welcome to San Diego** — also known as America's Finest City! Here you'll find the finest weather...the finest beaches...and the finest whatever else you're looking for.

We asked some of our San Diego friends for their recommendations on where to sample some of the local cuisine—and not just the Mexican dishes you'd expect in a border town. Here, there's everything from steakhouses to seafood places to the best Asian food this side of the Pacific. We put together a list of those secret locales that only the locals know about. After all, at Sonnhalter, we not only like to get our hands dirty...we like to get them sticky and salty too!

When you're not convening at the Convention Center, make sure you get out and about to see the city's many sights—from the old mission to the historic Gaslamp Quarter. See why they call San Diego America's Finest City!

## Downtown

### **De Medici Ristorante Italiano**

Italian  
(619) 702-7228  
[www.demedicisandiego.com/](http://www.demedicisandiego.com/)

From steak Diane prepared tableside to the posh decor, this Italian eatery offers old-world charm.

### **The Lion's Share**

American (New)  
(619) 564-6924  
[www.lionsshare.com/](http://www.lionsshare.com/)

The Lion's Share delivers a unique, eclectic and comfortable experience. Dine or drink and enjoy meticulously crafted cocktails along with a menu prepared with only the highest quality ingredients. Venture into the wild with popular dishes like antelope sliders, game sausage board or bison tartare. Indulge further by pairing these with one of our 40 craft cocktails or variety of beers, wines and spirits.

### **Richard Walker's Pancake House**

Breakfast  
(619) 231-7777  
[www.richardwalkers.com](http://www.richardwalkers.com)

Come early or expect to wait at this breakfast-and-lunch-only Downtown link of the Illinois-based American chain, where soufflé-like pancakes, housemade syrup and thick-cut bacon will ruin any diet but keep wallets intact; brisk staffers help offset waits by rushing patrons in and out of the appealing, high-ceilinged space.

## Harbor District

### **Kansas City BBQ**

BBQ  
(619) 231-9680  
[www.kcbbq.net](http://www.kcbbq.net)

A little hole in the wall that you might remember from scenes in Top Gun—when they are playing "Great Balls of Fire" on the piano! Opened 30 years ago by Kansas City natives Martin and Cindy Blair, Kansas City Barbeque was one of the first restaurants to usher in the downtown dining re-vitalization of San Diego.

### **Sally's Fish House & Bar**

Seafood  
(619) 358-6740  
[www.sallysandiego.com](http://www.sallysandiego.com)

Fine dining seafood restaurant on the water. Whether you're looking for a night of sushi and sake or crab-crusting New York strip steak and merlot, our menu is all about unforgettable flavors.

## Banker's Hill

### **Barrio Star**

Mexican  
(619) 501-7827  
[www.isabelscantina.com](http://www.isabelscantina.com)

Fresh ingredients and a unique blending of flavors to craft refreshing Mexican dishes; margaritas are "made to perfection" by a friendly staff, and the Dia de los Muertos decor adds interest.

### **Bertrand's at Mister A's**

American (new)  
(619) 239-1377  
[www.bertrandatmisteras.com](http://www.bertrandatmisteras.com)

Bertrand Hug's sensational Bankers Hill American screams special occasion thanks to simply breathtaking bay and skyline views and a setting that's as elegant as you get in these parts.

### **Cucina Urbana**

Italian  
(619) 239-2222  
[www.cucinaurbana.com](http://www.cucinaurbana.com)

"Unlike anything else in San Diego", this swinging Bankers Hill Italian by restaurateur Tracy Borkum is where the cool people go for reliable, innovative entrees and amazing bottles that sell at retail (plus corkage fee) from an on-site wine shop.

## Gaslamp

### La Puerta

Mexican  
(619) 696-3466  
www.lapuertasd.com

Tacos, Tunes & Tequila...that's what this place is all about. Their Sinaloa inspired family recipes demand they make nearly everything on the menu fresh daily and never use artificial flavorings or enhancers.

### Osteria Panevino

Italian  
(619) 595-7959  
www.osteriapanevino.com

Featuring a wide variety of authentic Italian dishes, including Osso Buco, featuring some of the best pasta in San Diego.

### Rustic Root

American  
(619) 232-1747  
www.rusticroot.com

Modern rooftop destination showcasing a dynamic rustic American cuisine where dishes are rooted in tradition, yet have an inventive modern flair with signature and timeless iconic classic drinks.

### Sevilla

Spanish, Tapas  
(619) 233-5979  
www.cafesevilla.com

Tip-top for tasty tapas and great sangria, this fun Gaslamp Spanish is the place to be on weekends thanks to a club atmosphere, live music and flamenco performances, but you better have reservations; it has a just-like-Madrid feel and solid service, but bring muchos pesos because those little dishes sure add up.

### Taka Restaurant

Japanese  
(619) 338-0555  
www.takasushi.com

Come discover a new way to eat sushi... Taka also offers an exciting selection of American foods served in the Japanese style. Taka is well known for its outstanding Sushi and Sashimi creations. A casual nook, plus seasonal sushi/sashimi & hot/cold sake.

### Tin Fish

American (new), Seafood  
(619) 238-8100  
www.tinfishgaslamp.com

Serving what some say are the best fish tacos around, not to mention great cioppino and scallops, this quick-fix chain might be noisy, but service is fast and the affordable menu is full of tasty seafood; there are good deals at lunch and many insist there's nothing better than enjoying the Gaslamp outpost's outdoor patio on a nice day.

## East Village

### Basic

Pizza/Lounge  
(619) 531-8869  
www.barbasic.com

Cracker-thin, crispy crust pizza, a wide beer selection and reasonable prices bring a casual crowd to this post-work or pre-Padres place in East Village; chill staffers tend the garage, modern-loft space that turns clubby on weekends, and great art openings and music events add appeal.

### Café Chloe

French  
(619) 232-3242  
www.cafechloe.com

"Oh-so-French", this hip little bistro with wonderful Parisian ambiance and appealing intimacy draws top chefs and the pretty people now inhabiting East Village for joie de vivre-affirming meals and killer wines.

### Lucky's Lunch Counter

Breakfast, Lunch  
(619) 255-4782  
www.luckyslunchcounter.com

Nostalgic neighborhood spot right across from Petco Park. Serving up over-stuffed sandwiches, build your own salads and traditional breakfast fare. Cool Jewish deli vibe and hands down the best Reuben west of the Hudson River.

### The Mission

Breakfast  
(619) 232-7662  
www.themissionsd.com

Carefully conceived and prepared breakfasts and lunches feature an interesting hippie, international twist at this Asian-Nuevo Latino trio, where prices are reasonable and portions will last you all day; a total of three locations in the San Diego area.



## Hillcrest/Mission Hills

### Brooklyn Girl

American (new)  
(619) 296-4600  
www.brooklyngirl Eatery.com

With "SoHo"-style decor and a great vibe, this real gem in Mission Hills is more like a NY or SF spot; American menu of interesting family-style entrees, quite good desserts and best-deal bar bites.

### Hash House

Breakfast  
(619) 298-4646  
www.hashhouseagogo.com

Famed for portions huge enough to feed your neighborhood, this American kitchen in Hillcrest is not simply quantity over quality —its fans say that the incredible country food makes it the undisputed champion of breakfast at a good value; the setting's hip, and, though lines can get crazy, the consensus is it's well worth the wait.

### Izakaya Masa

Japanese  
(619) 542-1354  
www.izakayamasa.com

An izakaya is a common kind of Japanese bar or restaurant. Also found in cosmopolitan cities throughout the world, popular in Japan for after-work drinking. A definitive feature of an izakaya is that it serves food that complements the drinks and could be compared to Spanish tapas.

## Little Italy

### Bencotto Italian Kitchen

Italian  
(619) 450-4786  
www.lovebencotto.com

"Bringing real Italian to Little Italy," offering an affordable menu of housemade everything with a cutting-edge twist; the modern, sleek setting attracts a noisy, hip crowd, and it's always busy, so get reservations.

### Craft & Commerce

Gastropub  
(619) 269-2202  
www.craft-commerce.com

You can't help but feel cool upon entering this dark, packed Little Italy gastropub, where the clever decor eschews a cookie-cutter formula and matches the unique midpriced menu of quality, farm-fresh New American food and artisan cocktails.

### Influx

Breakfast/Lunch  
(619) 255-0735  
www.influxcafe.com

Classic handmade danish and croissant, inventive sandwiches on freshly baked bread, healthy gourmet salads, the finest coffees, espresso and cold beverages.

### Isola Pizza Bar

Pizza  
(619) 255-4230  
www.isolapizzabar.com

Pizzas are thin and delicious. Wines are from the owner's family vineyard and everything they serve is cooked in the oven they imported straight from Italy. Killer happy hour as well.

## South Park

### Buona Forchetta

Pizza, Italian  
(619) 381-4844  
www.buonaforchettasd.com

A Northern Italian owner whose family is behind Farchioni olive oil, an oven by Stefano Ferrara, a three-time World Pizza Champion as consultant, and a pizzaiolo who trained at New York's popular and authentic pizzeria Keste.

## North Park

### Atypical Waffle Company

Brunch  
(619) 806-0345  
www.atypicalwaffle.com

This Belgian treat of house made liege waffles with sweet & savory toppings. At Atypical Waffle, we mix true authentic Belgium imported ingredients with actual California street style. On any given day, there are about a dozen different creations, half sweet and half savory—all for your consumption.

### Carnitas' Snack Shack

American (new)  
(619) 294-7675  
www.carnitassnackshack.com

Named for chef/co-owner Hanis Cavin's pet pig (whose likeness adorns the roof), this North Park American-Eclectic peddles porcine pleasures such as stacked-high sandwiches and yummy pork belly at reasonable prices; though there can be a wait, the counter service is friendly and there's limited seating on a pleasant patio.

### The Linkery

Gastropub  
(619) 255-8778  
www.thelinkery.com

This trendy gastropub remains at "the forefront of the farm-to-table movement" with inventive eclectic dishes featuring quality, locally grown items, including popular housemade sausages, all complemented by notable local beers and offered at moderate prices.

## University Heights

### Big Front Door (bfd)

Lunch, Sandwich Shop  
(619) 255-4100  
www.bfdsandiego.com

The menu is sandwich-focused, but these are huge, stuffed-full meals-in-a-sandwich sandwiches that come hot and cold, savory and even sweet.

### Cueva Bar

Tapas  
(619) 269-6612  
www.cuevabar.com

Chef-owner Oz Blackaller keeps the energy level high at this small Argentinean tapas bar in University Heights, purveying an inexpensive menu of baked empanadas, flatbreads, salads and apps; its name translates as 'cave,' but the vivid orange color scheme and frequent live music make for a lively vibe.

### Muzita Abyssinian Bistro

Ethiopian  
(619) 546-7900  
www.muzita.com

Mighty tasty Ethiopian food draws word-of-mouth raves for this moderately priced University Heights bungalow, where great staffers show guests how to wrap so delicious meat and veggies in injera bread and eat it with their hands!

### Pomegranate

Russian/Georgian  
(619) 298-4007  
www.pomegranatesd.com

For those looking for a food adventure, this eclectic corner eatery serves everything from borscht to pierogi, with authentic Russian service. Try the shashlik, a slowly roasted pork loin, lamb or chicken kebab covered in pomegranate molasses, served on Fri & Sat.

## Bay Park

### Bay Park Fish Co.

Seafood  
(619) 276-3474  
www.bayparkfishco.com

Friendly, efficient staffers share their passion for fresh fish at this reasonably priced Bay Park seafood shack and market, where heavenly entrees—like the vaunted tacos—are simply prepared and catches of the day are available at the counter; the urban-industrial decor may be a bit bare-bones, but some love its informal, unaffected feel.

## Point Loma/Liberty Station/Ocean Beach

### Fathom Bistro Bait & Tackle

Burgers, Sausages & Hot Dogs  
(619) 222-5835  
www.fathombistro.com

San Diego's only tap house on the water. 15 taps of local, and not so local brews. Sausages, burgers and kimchi made in house.

### Jimmy's Famous American Tavern

American (new)  
(619) 226-2103  
www.j-fat.com

Set right on the water in Shelter Island with beautiful views of the harbor, this casual American features dynamite sandwiches, big burgers and a fine beer selection presented by a fast, friendly staff; even if a few find it pricey for the genre, most guests leave very satisfied.

### OB Noodle House & Sake Bar

Asian Fusion  
(619) 450-6868  
www.obnoodlehouse.com

Bustling restaurant & bar specializes in pho, beer on tap & a wide variety of sake drinks. OB Noodle House is known for their signature pho bowls and Asian-fusion dishes.

### Phil's BBQ

BBQ  
(619) 226-6333  
www.philsbbq.net

Wonderful aromas of scrumptious, exceedingly tender ribs and pulled pork draw lines longer than Disneyland to this benchmark BBQ spot; diners dig in at basic tables equipped with plenty of paper towels to mop up the finger-lickin' feast.

### The 3rd Corner

American (new)  
(619) 223-2700  
www.the3rdcorner.com

Guests at this swanky but reasonably priced Ocean Beach bistro and wine shop (with an Encinitas sib) can indulge in delectable Californian small plates while sipping wonderful wines; the multiple seating areas are always bustling with convivial company, and warm staffers add to the thoroughly enjoyable experience.

## Coronado

### Leroy's Kitchen & Lounge

American (new)  
(619) 437-6087  
www.leroyskitchenandlounge.com

Entrepreneur David Spatafore adds farm-to-table fare to his repertoire at this Coronado resto-bar serving Eclectic eats (braised short ribs, bacon pepper prawns) bolstered by local draft beers and clever cocktails; the public space with open rafters, exposed ductwork and raw wood features a bar area as well as a separate dining room.

### Primavera Ristorante

Italian  
(619) 435-0454  
www.primavera1st.com

Elegant eatery serving a Northern Italian-focused menu in an intimate space with romantic lighting. An outstanding culinary team preparing exquisite meals for nearly 30 years and has achieved world renowned success with its house specialty, Osso Bucco.

### Stake Chophouse & Bar

Steak  
(619) 522-0077  
www.bluebridgehospitality.com/  
stakechophouse/

A modern take on the classic chophouse of decades past with a chef-driven menu sourced with only the highest quality ingredients available. The menu includes a number of share-friendly filets, chops and dry-aged prime steak, an expansive selection of ice-cold shellfish & crudo, healthy salads and rustic, wood fire-roasted side dishes, in addition to a handful of freshly composed seafood entrées.

## La Mesa

### Mario's De La Mesa Restaurant

Mexican  
(619) 461-9390  
8425 La Mesa Blvd (b/t Crowder Ln & Grant Ave)

Without question one of the best tamales in San Diego County. It's a genuine family restaurant, with Mario's daughter Patty and her husband Ernesto running the place. If it's a good enchilada or taco you crave...you can depend on Mario's to serve up an authentic Mexican meal.

### Terra American Bistro

American (new)  
(619) 293-7088  
www.terrasd.com

Chef/co-owner Jeff Rossman uses all-natural, organic ingredients from local purveyors in his fresh, tasty small and large plates at this intimate, noisy East San Diego New American.

### The Riviera Supper Club & Turquoise Room

Steakhouse  
(619) 713-6777  
www.rivierasupperclub.com

This mid-priced "cook-your-own-steak" place in La Mesa features a big BBQ grill where convivial crowds gather to sear tender, nicely aged strips and sirloins while downing tasty, massive, strong cocktails; it boasts solid service and a killer atmosphere ideal for hanging with friends, and the attached Turquoise Room bar hosts live music nightly.

## Pacific Beach

### The Fishery

Seafood  
(858) 272-9985  
www.thefishery.com

"As if it flipped out of the net and onto your plate" cheer fans of the first-rate seafood excellently prepared at this relaxed Pacific Beach gem; some say it's on the expensive side for eating in a fish market, but the staff is responsive and helpful and the functional setting pleasant.

### The Patio on Lamont Street

American (new)  
(858) 412-4648  
www.thepatiosd.com

A few blocks from the beach, but miles away from a sleepy beach bar. A cozy and vibrant place where you always feel at home.

## Kearny Mesa

### Crab Town

Seafood/Cajun  
(858) 737-4972  
www.crabtownlove.com

Laid-back seafood joint offering fresh crawfish, build-your-own platters, Louisiana and Cajun style seafood and with great appetizer selections!

## La Jolla

### Cusp Dining & Drinks

Mediterranean  
(858) 551-3620  
www.cusprestaurant.com

Mix and mingle at La Jolla's hottest new spot for craft cocktails and Mediterranean-inspired cuisine. Cusp is where sophisticated meets friendly—relax, sit and stay awhile. Wine, dine and socialize as the sun goes down over the Pacific.

### George's At The Cove

American (new)  
(858) 454-4244  
www.georgesatthecove.com

Fantastic Californian fare, an eclectic, extensive wine list and a one-of-a-kind setting boasting unsurpassed ocean views; plus the relaxed rooftop terrace offers a less pricey option for equally enjoyable meals.

### Nine-Ten

American (new)  
(858) 964-5400  
www.nine-ten.com

Edgy, inspired Cal-Eclectic dishes at this delightful surprise in La Jolla's Grande Colonial Hotel. An ongoing commitment to innovative cuisine using only the freshest local produce makes this a must visit for culinary aficionados.

### Prepkitchen

American (new)  
(858) 875-7737  
www.prepkitchen.com

Delicious, fresh, local American fare—think finger-lickin'-good house-cured charcuterie, healthy, gourmet salads and inventive cocktails—is prepared with care at this value-oriented trio by the Whisknadle folks; all are unpretentious and boast cool spaces, with a smaller La Jolla branch, a newly renovated Del Mar location and a big bar prime for low-key evening drinking in Little Italy.

## Rancho Santa Fe

### Morada

American  
(858) 381-8289  
www.theinnatrsf.com/dining/morada/

Celebration of local farms, fine meats and sustainable fresh catch from Baja to Alaska. Menu highlights include pan-roasted baby octopus, Carlsbad mussels, natural beef tartare, honey-glazed Chilean sea bass. For the carnivores, try the rib-eye, short ribs, lamb chops and more.

### Rancho Valencia

American (new)  
(858) 756-1123  
www.ranchovalencia.com

Leave the troubles of the world behind and head out to this favorite at the heavenly Rancho Santa Fe resort (it shouts wealth and elegance) for an excellent, luxurious Cal-Mediterranean meal.

## Del Mar

### Del Mar Rendezvous

Chinese  
(858) 755-2669  
www.delmarrendezvous.com

Delicately flavored with a focus on fresh ingredients, the upscale Chinese at this Del Mar Plaza eatery is consistently yummy and priced very fairly—especially on half-price wine nights; full gluten-free and vegetarian menus, charming, personable staffers and a comfortable setting adorned with Asian art also help make it a favorite of many.

### Jake's

Seafood  
(858) 755-2002  
www.jakesdelmar.com

"You'll feel like the waves are going to break on your table" at this somewhat pricey Del Mar seafoodery, offering panoramic views from a dining room that sits right on the beach; the Californian fare may be secondary, but it's still spot on, and patrons appreciate the such-a-steal happy hour and attentive service.

### Market

American (new)  
(858) 523-0007  
www.marketdelmar.com

"Everything is spectacular" on genius chef-owner Carl Schroeder's irresistible menu at this expensive-but-worth-it Del Mar must, where inventive Californian dishes (plus sushi) drawing on many cultures pair with unknown gems from a thoughtful wine list.

### Pamplemousse Grille

French  
(858) 792-9090  
www.pgrille.com

Even those not easily impressed will be blown away by the French-New American masterpieces, magisterial wine list and sticker-shock prices at this class act in a Solana Beach office complex; bigger-than-life chef-owner Jeffrey Strauss is a great host.

### Sbicca

American (new)  
(858) 481-1001  
www.sbiccadelmar.com

Creative New American fare with a fusion flair and a wonderful wine list draw foodies to this Del Mar bistro, where friendly staffers deliver genuine California charm and you can smell the ocean while you dine; the rooftop terrace has a killer Pacific view and inside there's a lively bar scene, especially on hard-to-beat half-price vino nights or after the horse races at the nearby track.

### Trattoria Ponte Vecchio

Italian  
(858) 259-9063  
www.pvdelmar.com

Quaint neighborhood fixture Trattoria Ponte Vecchio offers a robust selection of Northern Italian, Sicilian and authentic rustic Italian dishes with excellent daily specials like risotto, Osso Buco, pork chop and fresh fish of the day.



## Encinitas

### Craftsman New American Tavern

American (new)  
(760) 452-2000  
www.craftsmantavern.com

Not your traditional tavern. Chef-owner Wade Hageman emphasizes comfort food, from homemade sausages and charcuterie, to free-range chicken, short ribs and mac 'n cheese. Expect a warm atmosphere, craft beer and classic cocktails.

### Fish 101

Seafood  
(760) 943-6221  
www.fish101restaurant.com

A modern interpretation of a traditional West Coast fish house. Local and seasonal fish, shellfish and produce are highlighted here. All seafood is sourced in accordance with Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program.

### Haggo's Organic Taco

Mexican  
(760) 753-6000  
www.haggosorganictaco.com

Searching for a quintessential, slightly-weird but strangely cool local SoCal spot to add to your itinerary? This little establishment features all the seaside charm you'd expect, with an outdoor seating/dining garden, eclectic art and decor and wonderfully tasty tacos that are worth the extra change. Only open for lunch.

### Trattoria I Trulli

Italian  
(760) 943-6800  
www.trattoriaitrullisd.com

Truly a "mom & pop" operation, the three partners kept the integrity of their Mama's marinara sauce and bread recipes, as well as the gnocchi, lasagna and ravioli made by hand daily.

## San Diego Area

### In-N-Out Burger

Multiple locations in San Diego  
www.in-n-out.com

Best burger ever, made with fresh meat which is ground on site and you can watch the workers peel and grate the potatoes. Make sure to order your burger "animal style" (with grilled onions and In-N-Out's special sauce).



## Nightlife and Bars

### Barleymash

www.barleymash.com

### Catalina Lounge

4202 Voltaire St (b/t Catalina Blvd & Mendocino Blvd)

### El Dorado Cocktail Lounge

www.eldoradobar.com

### Fifth & Rose

www.pendry.com/san-diego/dining/fifth-rose/

### Hamilton's Tavern

www.hamiltonstavern.com

### Karl Strauss Brewery

www.karlstrauss.com

### Level 9 Rooftop Bar

www.hotelinsd.com

### Live Wire

www.livewirebar.com/

### Star Bar

423 E St (b/t 4th Ave & 5th Ave)

### Starlite

www.starlitesandiego.com

### Sycamore Den

www.sycamoreden.com

### The Field (Irish Pub)

www.thefield.com

### The Regal Beagle

www.regalbeaglesd.com

### The Tin Can

www.thetincan1.wordpress.com

### The Topsy Crow

www.thetipsycrow.com/

### Trailer Park After Dark

www.trailerparkafterdark-sandiego.com

### Vin De Syrah Spirit & Wine Parlor

www.syrahwineparlor.com

### Wet Stone Wine Bar

www.wetstonewinebar.com

### The Whiskey House

www.thewhiskeyhousesd.com

### Whistle Stop

www.whistlestopbar.com

### Yard House

www.yardhouse.com/CA/san-diego-restaurant/

## San Diego Sightseeing

### Balboa Park

The world's largest urban cultural park. It's home to 15 major museums, gardens, performing arts venues and many other attractions, including the zoo.  
www.balboapark.org

### Junipero Serra Museum and Presidio Park

www.sandiegohistory.org/serra\_museum.html

### La Jolla

Home to beaches, golf and other activities.  
www.lajolla.com

### Museum of Contemporary Art

www.mcasd.org

### PETCO Park

Home of the San Diego Padres.  
www.petcoparkevents.com

### Qualcomm Stadium

Home of the San Diego Chargers.  
www.sandiego.gov/qualcomm

### SeaWorld San Diego

www.seaworldparks.com/seaworld-sandiego

### Seaport Village

www.seaportvillage.com

### The Gaslamp Quarter

www.gaslamp.org

### The San Diego Zoo

www.sandiegozoo.org/zoo

### The Whaley House

www.whaleyhouse.org

### USS Midway Museum

www.midway.org

## Taxi & Limo Services

### AK Cab

(619) 306-9761

### Black Swan Transportation

(619) 701-3789

### Doug's Cab and Limo

(619) 730-5344

### La Costa Limousine

(760) 438-4455

### Yellow Radio Service of San Diego

(619) 239-8061

**FOR INSIDER'S GUIDES TO OTHER CITIES:**

[sonnhalter.com/insiders-guides](http://sonnhalter.com/insiders-guides)

