

## SAN DIEGO FOOD FINDS BLOG

SAN DIEGO'S BEST RESTAURANTS, MARKETS AND LOCAL CULINARY OFFERINGS PO BOX 675362 RANCHO SANTA FE CA 92067

# Our Downtown Dining Favorites

BY MARIA DESIDERATA MONTANA POSTED ON DECEMBER 19, 2015

Downtown San Diego dining wouldn't be what it is today without some of our favorite culinary creations. The heart of downtown is home to historic buildings and unique spaces that set the stage for unforgettable dining experiences. Acclaimed chefs and visionary restaurateurs have created a thriving dining scene in downtown San Diego for you to experience.



CARROT AGUACHILE AT BRACEO (PHOTO BY MARIA DESIDERATA MONTANA)

## **Downtown**

You don't want to miss iconic destination [Dobson's Restaurant & Bar](#). A staple in the San Diego culinary scene since the early 1980s, this French-American bistro has been serving food to some of the most prominent figures in the city. Their legendary Mussel Bisque has been on the menu since the restaurant's opening 31 years ago. The bisque is made of mirepoix stock, lobster and whole mussels covered with puff pastry. Tableside, servers break into the golden, flaky crust and pour a splash of sherry. Bon appetit!

Bring your family to [Juniper & Ivy](#), a modernist American restaurant set in a converted 1920s saw tooth warehouse located on the outskirts of San Diego's Little Italy. The Juniper and Ivy kitchen is helmed by Celebrity Chef Richard Blais, winner of Bravo's Top Chef All-Stars and successful restaurateur, cookbook author and television personality. Dining areas feature natural hickory-stained tabletops, elevated leather booth spaces and white lacquered tables, and an outdoor patio offers al fresco dining year-round. A large party of up to fifty can book a private dining room that overlooks the bar and exposed floor-to-ceiling wine wall. Located on the main level, the semi-private dining room looks out to the open concept kitchen and seats up to sixty guests.



If you're looking for classic American fare, stop by Union Kitchen & Tap in the Gaslamp. A neighborhood restaurant in a popular part of town, Union Kitchen & Tap creates distinctive San Diego dishes. The San Diego Blackened Chicken Wrap with blackened chicken, roasted corn and red pepper salsa, avocado, cotija cheese and roasted red pepper aioli is exclusive to San Diego. Sticking to traditional Southern California elements, the Pacifico beer-battered fish tacos are a must. Served on fresh corn tortillas, the battered cod is topped with cabbage, jalapeno cream and pico de gallo.

Craving breakfast for lunch (or dinner and a midnight snack)? Brian's 24 in the historical Gaslamp has been serving breakfast, lunch and dinner 24 hours a day since opening in 2008. A local favorite, the Gaslamp Power Breakfast includes three eggs any style, bacon, a sausage patty, a ham steak and a side of biscuits and gravy. If you're feeling adventurous, try the Peanut Butter Burger. The half-pound patty is topped with a slice of cheese, bacon strips and peanut butter. Your taste buds will be in burger heaven! With its classic diner vibe, enjoy an all-American day downtown at Brian's 24.

Celebrating the richness of American culture through its appetizing bar fare, barleymash guarantees a good time. Known for its alcohol-infused dishes, the Citrus Vodka Seafood Cocktail is a must. It includes fresh white fish, lime poached shrimp, cucumber, avocado and a zesty tomato cocktail sauce in a martini glass. If you're craving something heartier, try the Duck, Duck, Goat barleymac with beer-cheese sauce, spiced duck confit, crispy duck skin, goat cheese and balsamic-Jager drizzle. The eatery provides a drinking and eating experience, all wrapped into one!



JUNIPER AND IVY (PHOTO BY MARIA DESIDERATA MONTANA)

## Little Italy

Paying tribute to the unique roots of Mexican families in California, Bracero Cocina de Raiz prepares authentic Mexican dishes that have been passed down from generation to generation. The House Guacamole is one-of-a-kind with ripe avocados, crispy beluga lentils, chickpeas, black bean hummus and a side of sea salt chips to dip. Bracero's Carrot Aguachile provides a fresh burst of flavors from the Baja region of Mexico. The dish features local tuna, Baja scallops, smoked steelhead roe, carrots and ginger. The eatery offers a unique and authentic Mexican food experience in the city.

Created by a husband-and-wife team from Northern Italy, Guido Nistri and Valentina Di Pietro, with the support of Chef Fabrizio Cavallini, Monello offers a unique approach to Italian cooking. Combining their range of experiences from the restaurant business in Milano, Modena, San Diego, and New York, the philosophy at Monello is that food can be made simple and supremely delicious and that everything on the menu is prepared fresh and made to order. The owners' unique approach to Italian cooking tradition offers handmade "home-style" dishes in an environment that reflects who they are—a young generation of Italians who celebrate their culinary heritage, presented in a modern, relaxed, and inviting kitchen-restaurant.



*Sirena Gourmet*  
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SIRENA LATIN GOURMET (PHOTO BY MARIA DESIDERATA MONTANA)

Take a culinary journey to Italy at Pan Bon in Little Italy. With a state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen, Pan Bon has become an escape from the commonplace culinary culture. Kick dinner off with antipasti such as Polenta e Funghi, baked polenta topped with melted Raschera cheese and sautéed mushrooms. Dining with friends? Order the Tagliere, a selection of fine Italian meats, cheeses and marmalade. For your *primi* and *secondi* courses, choose from an array of al dente pastas tossed in homemade, Old World Italian sauces.

Seafood at Sirena is as sensational as the sea it comes from! Taking inspiration from the rich and diverse cultures of Latin America, each dish delivers a colorful dining experience. Stop in for dinner and try the spectacular Chileno Ceviche. The dish is crafted with the catch of the day, salmon, scallops, octopus, bell peppers, lemon, cilantro and churrasca. Before wrapping up your tour of downtown dining, end the day on a sweet note and visit iDessert for a custom-made dessert. Build your creation on one of the iPad stations or select one of the chef's favorites. Choose from over 16 crusts, eight gelato flavors, five types of cake and six sauces. The possibilities are endless and no two desserts are alike! All of the ingredients at iDessert are natural and fresh, so give in to your sweet tooth cravings and enjoy building your own dessert!