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Inside Liberty
Station—San
Diego's "It"
Neighborhood

AROUND
San Diego
in

80
BITES

A CULINARY TOUR OF S.D. COUNTY IN
HONOR OF *WHERE'S* 80TH ANNIVERSARY



AROUND

SAN DIEGO

in

80

BITES

Eat your way through the city in honor of *Where* magazine's 80th anniversary.

BY SARAH DAoust AND DAVID MOYE

First things first: More than a handful of different tacos are highlighted in the feature you're about to read. In our defense, we narrowed them down from a list of 68 strong contenders. (Hey, San Diego is a taco-centric town, and we're just living in it.) Taco talk aside, we are celebrating a monumental milestone in 2016: *Where* magazine is turning 80 years old! In celebration, we've rounded up 80 delicious bites of food—in no particular order—that embrace the culture, diversity, history and future of America's Finest City. No pocket of San Diego County or category of cuisine was left unexplored. We invite you to do the same, starting with 80 of our favorites. Happy Birthday to us!

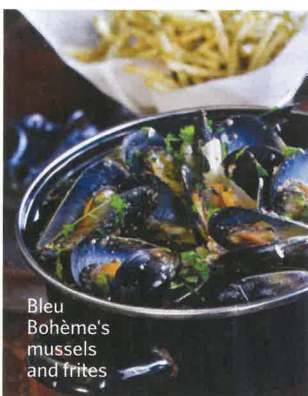


1 Easily San Diego's slam-dunk dish of the year in 2015, the **Albacore Two Ways** at the hottest of hotspots, Bracero Cocina de Raiz, still reigns supreme in 2016. Three masterpiece morsels of albacore—both seared and in tartare form—are layered with crispy eggplant, burnt-onion crème fraîche, jalapeño ponzu and lime-salsa verde. Whoa. **>BRACERO COCINA DE RAIZ** 1490 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy, 619.756.7864

2 The **Triple Threat Pork Sandwich** at Carnitas' Snack Shack is sinfully sensational three times over, stuffed with pork loin schnitzel, pulled pork and bacon. **>CARNITAS' SNACK SHACK** 2632 University Ave., North Park, 619.294.7675; 12873 El Camino Real, Del Mar, 858.350.7675

3 The lightly sautéed **jumbo lump crab cake** with spicy chive remoulade at Eddie V's is our favorite crab cake in the city—simple, flavorful and fresh. **>EDDIE V'S PRIME SEAFOOD** 789 W. Harbor Drive, downtown, 619.615.0281; 1270 Prospect St., La Jolla, 858.459.5500

4 The **Blazin Ahi Sandwich** at Queenstown Public House is a special one—filled with seared ahi tuna, cucumbers, pickled carrots, crunchy wasabi peas and served on a big Hawaiian bun. So good. **>QUEENSTOWN PUBLIC HOUSE** 1557 Columbia St., Little Italy, 619.546.0444



Bleu Bohème's mussels and frites

5 The **pork rolled tacos** with tender, juicy pork meat at Las Cuatro Milpas are well worth the wait in the long line that usually wraps around the corner at lunchtime. **>LAS CUATRO MILPAS** 1857 Logan Ave., Barrio Logan, 619.234.4460

6 The salty ground **lamb samosas** with two dipping sauces at India Palace arrive piping hot and perfect. **>INDIA PALACE** 694 University Ave., Hillcrest, 619.294.8886

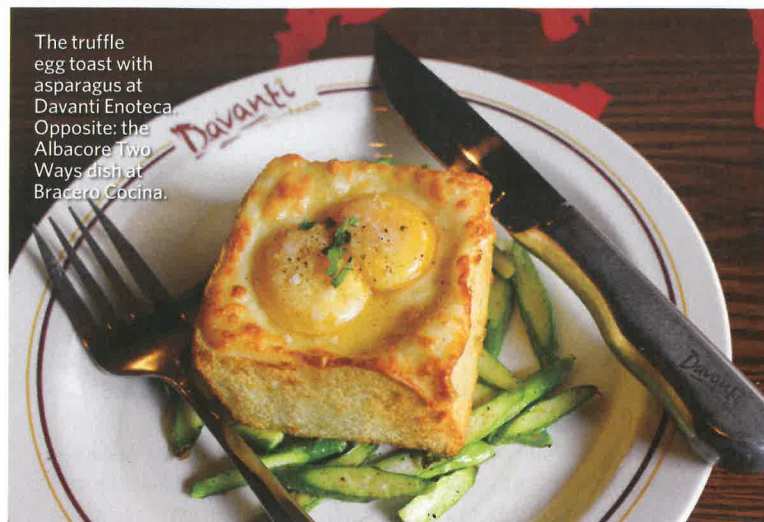
7 No trip to Julian is complete without fresh apple pie, but we crave the addictive double-chocolate-peanut-butter-crunch **Wunderbars** at Julian Pie Company even more. **>JULIAN PIE COMPANY** 2225 Main St., Julian, 760.765.2449

8 Some ramen aficionados may disagree, but we love the simple **house ramen** and boutique urban ambiance at Underbelly in Little Italy—bean sprouts, scallions, seaweed, sesame seeds and a soft-boiled egg. Mmmm. **>UNDERBELLY** 750 W. Fir St., Little Italy, 619.269.4626

9 The lightly decadent **truffle egg toast** starter with fontina and asparagus at Davanti Enoteca likely will dance in your dreams later. **>DAVANTI ENOTECA** 1655 India St., Little Italy, 619.237.9606; 12955 El Camino Real, Del Mar, 858.519.5060

10 We've nicknamed the **truffled French fries** with Parmesan and truffle aioli at Bankers Hill Bar & Restaurant "Satan's salty fingers" for a reason. Try to eat just one. Seriously, just try. **>BANKERS HILL BAR & RESTAURANT** 2202 Fourth Ave., Bankers Hill, 619.231.0222

11 The **Mashed pizza** at Basic—topped with actual mashed potatoes, mozzarella and bacon—is our favorite white



The truffle egg toast with asparagus at Davanti Enoteca. Opposite: the Albacore Two Ways dish at Bracero Cocina.

pie of all time. **>BASIC** 410 10th Ave., East Village, 619.531.8869

12 The ribs usually get the deserved raves at Coop's West Texas BBQ, but we crave the spicy, almost fruity **Southwestern Jerk Chicken** (with sides of potato salad and coleslaw). **>COOP'S WEST TEXAS BBQ** 2625 Lemon Grove Ave., Lemon Grove, 619.589.0478

13 When we go to Super Cocina, we forgo the famous burritos and savor the homemade stews. The **Caldo de Res** (beef stew with veggies) is exceptional. **>SUPER COCINA** 3627 University Ave., City Heights, 619.584.6244

14 The \$7.95 lunch special (two large entrées, soup, rice and naan bread) is one of the best deals in San Diego County. Try the **saag loo**—spinach cooked with potatoes in herbs and spices. **>HIMALAYAN CUISINE** 7918 El Cajon Blvd., La Mesa, 619.461.2503

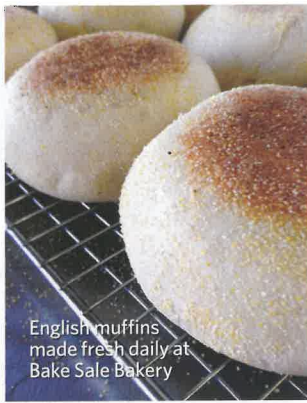
15 We live for the **mussels and frites** at Bleu Bohème, which offers seven sauce choices—one for each day of the week (or go for the mustard sauce every day). **>BLEU BOHÈME** 4090 Adams Ave., Kensington, 619.255.4167

16 Puesto at The Headquarters makes one of the best gourmet tacos we've had in years: the **filet mignon taco** with crispy melted cheese, avocado, spicy pistachio and jalapeño. **>PUESTO AT THE HEADQUARTERS** 789 W. Harbor Drive, #155, downtown, 619.233.8880

17 Nine-Ten is our pick for San Diego's most underrated burger: The **Nine-Ten burger** on its lunch menu—a half-pound of Angus beef, house-made pickles, butter lettuce, tomato and mustard-seed aioli. We like to add sautéed mushrooms and blue cheese. **>NINE-TEN RESTAURANT & BAR** 910 Prospect St., La Jolla, 858.964.5400

18 The wild-caught, local **yellowtail sashimi** with jalapeño, black-garlic ponzu, Thai basil oil and citrus salt at North Park's Saiko Sushi epitomizes sashimi at its simplest, finest and freshest. (Pair it with a flight of sake.) **>SAIKO SAKE & SUSHI BAR** 2884 University Ave., North Park, 619.677.3907

19 We daydream about the **lobster roll** at Ironside Fish & Oyster—luscious lobster chunks, brown-butter mayo, chives and crispy shallots loaded into a buttery Texas



English muffins made fresh daily at Bake Sale Bakery

toast-style bun. **>IRONSIDE FISH & OYSTER** 1654 India St., Little Italy, 619.269.3033

20 Warning: One slice of the deep-dish beast known as the **Monster of the Midway** at Lefty's Chicago Pizzeria may lead to an instant food coma. **>LEFTY'S CHICAGO PIZZERIA** 3448 30th St., North Park, 619.295.1720; 4030 Goldfinch St., Mission Hills, 619.299.4030

21 Cannonball at Belmont Park offers idyllic ocean views—ideal for enjoying their unusual but tasty **fried octopus meatballs**. **>CANNONBALL** 3105 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach, 858.228.9304

22 Visit the San Diego Zoo for the animals; return for the **Catch of the Day** fish special at Albert's Restaurant—possibly the best theme park restaurant in SoCal. **>ALBERT'S RESTAURANT** San Diego Zoo, 2920 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park, 619.685.3200

23 El Cuervo makes our favorite **carnitas**: deep-fried pork, juicy and crispy. Gorge on the free radishes and cucumbers at the salsa bar, and it's almost healthy. **>EL CUERVO** 110 Washington St., Mission Hills, 619.295.9713

24 Every Wednesday night at Monello, a unique **risotto** is prepared tableside in a

giant Parmesan cheese wheel. Each is pure heaven. **>MONELLO** 750 W. Fir St., Little Italy, 619.501.0030

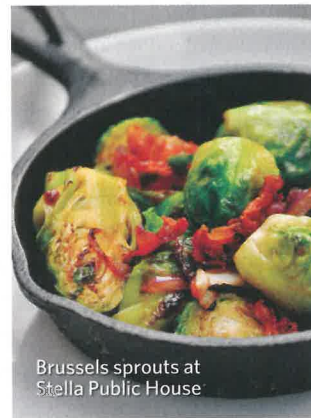
25 The **roasted beets salad** at The Cork and Craft is a thing of beauty—with aerated burrata, beet purée, marcona almonds, watercress, citrus and burnt orange. **>THE CORK AND CRAFT** 16990 Via Tazon, Rancho Bernardo, 858.618.2463

26 El Zarape Restaurant is known for its shrimp burritos, but we like to experiment with the specials—like the **chicken wasabi burrito** with wasabi sauce. **>EL ZARAPE RESTAURANT** 4642 Park Blvd., University Heights, 619.692.1652

27 Open since 1954, Venice Pizza House is an old-school Italian staple. We adore the **House Special**: sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, black olives, bell peppers and anchovies. **>VENICE PIZZA HOUSE** 3333 El Cajon Blvd., Normal Heights, 619.283.2333

28 Buy a tub of the **garlic spread** at Aladdin in Hillcrest and slather it on a piece of the café's freshly made pita bread. It will change your life. **>ALADDIN** 3900 Vermont St., Hillcrest, 619.574.1111

29 We love taking large groups to Middle Eastern restaurant Ali Baba to



Brussels sprouts at Stella Public House

feast on the charbroiled **spiced chicken kebabs** with onions under one of the canopied tables. **>ALI BABA** 421 E. Main St., El Cajon, 619.442.3622

30 The **big-eye tuna "pizza"** with truffle oil, red onion and ponzu at Kettner Exchange is more of a light, thin, crispy tortilla. We've been known to inhale it in 90 seconds flat. **>KETTNER EXCHANGE** 2001 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy, 619.255.2001

31 The **mahi mahi tacos** at South Beach Bar & Grille are the perfect end to any beach day. **>SOUTH BEACH BAR & GRILLE** 5059 Newport Ave., #104, Ocean Beach, 619.226.4577

32 The **oxtail ramen soup** at Rakiraki is so wonderfully beefy, it's like they juiced a cow. **>RAKIRAKI** 4646 Convoy St., Kearny Mesa, 858.573.2400

33 The meaty **sliced brisket sammie** with corn relish on Texas toast at Iron Pig Alehouse is so good, we almost can't even talk about it. **>IRON PIG ALEHOUSE** 1520 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach, 858.412.4299

34 The board of creamy **mascarpone polenta** topped with a ragu that changes daily at Cucina Enoteca is decadently delightful and great for sharing. **>CUCINA ENOTECA** 730 Via de la Valle, Del Mar, 858.704.4500

35 Inside Señor Mango's tucked away in University Heights, you'll find a generous **acai bowl** with bananas, strawberries and granola for \$6.25—our pick for best acai bowl in the city. **>SEÑOR MANGOS** 4607 30th St., University Heights, 619.584.0041

36 The warm **apple fritter** at Peterson's Donut Corner is nearly the size of a

catcher's mitt (**no joke**), as is the flavor. Share accordingly. **>PETERSON'S DONUT CORNER** 903 S. Escondido Blvd, Escondido, 760.745.7774

37 The **bone marrow soup** at Bonita's hidden gem Romesco Mediterranean Bistro are a true delicacy—made with fresh habanero, chile de arbol sauce, fried parsley and a beef glaze. **>ROMESCO MEDITERRANEAN BISTRO** 4346 Bonita Road, Bonita, 619.475.8627

38 Even hardcore carnivores will give props to the **vegetarian empanadas** at Q'ero Restaurant—filled with lentils, sweet potatoes, Swiss chard and spinach. **>Q'ERO RESTAURANT** 564 S. Coast Hwy. 101, Encinitas, 760.753.9053

39 The hearty, traditional **beef bourguignon** at BO-beau Kitchen & Bar is a dish after our own heart. **>BO-BEAU KITCHEN & BAR** 4996 W. Point Loma Blvd., Ocean Beach, 619.224.2884

40 The **octopus tacos** with bacon at Los Pinos Seafood are downright delectable. That is all. **>LOS PINOS SEAFOOD** 5575 Baltimore Drive #112, La Mesa, 619.825.3418

41 Your sweet tooth will be satisfied and then some with the **S'mores French toast** at Breakfast Republic, topped with marshmallows and chocolate drizzle. **>BREAKFAST REPUBLIC** 2730 University Ave North Park, 619.642.0299

42 Our favorite beach lunch: the **meatball sub** from Poma's Italian Deli and a picnic on Sunset Cliffs. **>POMA ITALIAN DELI** 1846 Bacon St., Ocean Beach, 619.223.3027

43 Happy hour at Cafe 21 offers our favorite deal in the Gaslamp: Choose from

22 Middle Eastern-influenced tapas at \$6 each and six types of sangria. Get the **cabbage rolls**.
> **CAFE21** 802 Fifth Ave., Gaslamp Quarter, 619.795.0721

44 The seasonal menu is always changing at Masters Kitchen and Cocktail in Oceanside, but the earthy-sweet **duck leg confit** with smoked gouda mac 'n' cheese is timeless.
> **MASTERS KITCHEN AND COCKTAIL** 208 S. Coast Hwy., Oceanside, 760.231.6278

45 El Indio invented the taquito 75 years ago, and still sets the standard with its **potato taquitos** with cheese and guacamole. > **EL INDIO** 3695 India St., Mission Hills, 619.299.0385

46 The **French onion soup** at A Delight of France bakery and bistro in Escondido will be the best \$7 bucks you spend on the day you decide to indulge in this cheesy bad boy.
> **A DELIGHT OF FRANCE** 126 W. Grand Ave., Escondido, 760.746.2644

47 An unsung hero on the menu at C Level on Harbor Island: **Michael's Crispy Artichoke Fritters**, accompanied by a fabulous lemon-caper aioli for dipping. Well done, Michael! > **C LEVEL** 880 Harbor Island Drive, Harbor Island, 619.298.6802

48 The **steak frites** at Café Chloe is a refined little plate of perfection—enhanced with herb butter and a simple salad of mixed greens on the side. We add an over-easy egg, just because we can.
> **CAFÉ CHLOE** 721 Ninth Ave., East Village, 619.232.3242

49 Farmer's Bottega makes a stunning **meat and cheese board**. Daily selections comprise imported and local cheeses and cured meats served with toasted artisanal



The house ramen at Underbelly in Little Italy

bread. > **FARMER'S BOTTEGA** 860 W. Washington St., Mission Hills, 619.458.9929

50 Sometimes the simple things in life taste the best, such as the daily house-made **English muffins and seasonal jam** at Bake Sale Bakery.

> **BAKE SALE BAKERY** 815 F St., East Village, 619.515.2224

51 The truffle oil drizzled on the **Hedgehog Roll**, which is topped with seared yellowtail and roasted garlic, at Wrench & Rodent makes it magical; plus crab and shrimp tempura

inside. > **WRENCH & RODENT SEABASSTROPUB** 1815 S. Coast Hwy., Oceanside, 760.271.0531

52 Point Loma Seafoods is our spot when we crave a **fried fish sandwich**, which comes with heavenly sourdough bread, tartar sauce and coleslaw.



The meat and cheese board at Farmer's Bottega

>**POINT LOMA SEAFOODS**
2805 Emerson St., Point Loma,
619.223.1109

53 At Sea180, the **mac 'n' cheese sauce** arrives slightly browned on top, but creamy and rich inside. And it tastes even

better while viewing the beach and ocean smack-dab in front of you. >**SEA180 COASTAL TAVERN** 800 Seacoast Drive, Imperial Beach, 619.631.4949

54 On Monday nights, we love the **\$15 rib-eye steak dinner** at Small Bar, with

a side of fun people-watching along Park Boulevard. >**SMALL BAR** 4628 Park Blvd., University Heights, 619.795.7998

55 The **deviled eggs** at Jake's Del Mar aren't your grandma's deviled eggs ... unless your grandma topped

hers with pieces of seared flat-iron steak, horseradish and blue cheese!

>**JAKE'S DEL MAR** 1660 Coast Blvd., Del Mar, 858.755.2002

56 Want an organic, truly "farm-to-table" salad? The produce in The Red Door's **garden chard and kale salad**—with warm bacon vinaigrette, organic egg, roasted garden beets, citrus-marinated red onion, crumbled feta, avocado and quinoa—comes from owner Trist Watlington's own farm. >**THE RED DOOR** 741 W. Washington St., Mission Hills, 619.295.6000

57 Snag a seat on the patio for weekend brunch at JRDN and order the signature **breakfast sandwich**—soft scrambled eggs, white cheddar, hash browns, bacon, ham and aioli all squished between brioche toast. Add a free side of boardwalk and ocean views. >**JRDN** 723 Felspar St., Pacific Beach, 858.270.5736

58 The **Naughty Ding Dong** at Leroy's is our unsung dessert hero—your own personal chocolate cake layered with surprises inside. (There's hazelnut, frangelico and cherry-vanilla ice cream involved.) >**LEROY'S KITCHEN & LOUNGE** 1015 Orange Ave., Coronado, 619.437.6087

59 At Civico 1845, the **vegetarian ravioli** with spinach and ricotta cheese is the best we've had. >**CIVICO 1845** 1845 India St., Little Italy, 619.431.5990

60 On hot days, we go to Saigon (if you love traditional Vietnamese cuisine this is the place) for the **spicy vermicelli noodle salad** with your choice of meat and veggies. >**SAIGON** 4455 El Cajon Blvd., City Heights, 619.284.4215

61 Our perfect Sunday drive includes a stop at

Betty's Pie Whole in Encinitas for **Grandma Lucy's Chicken Pie**—loaded with free-range chicken, baby carrots, peas and a Parmesan-herb crust. **>BETTY'S PIE WHOLE** 155 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas, 760.230.6781

62 At Sirena (a little-known gem in Little Italy), the **seared scallops** are simply sensational. **>SIRENA GOURMET LATIN SEAFOOD RESTAURANT** 1901 Columbia St., Little Italy, 619.564.8970

63 The **Barrio Bowl** at Barrio Star is our favorite healthy comfort food—power rice, boiled beans and organic steamed greens, topped with pico de gallo, cilantro-lime sauce and your choice of protein. We pick tofu or chicken. **>BARRIO STAR** 2706 Fifth Ave., Bankers Hill, 619.501.7827

64 The **pork belly and waffles** at West Coast Tavern come with bourbon-smoked syrup, garlic butter and added bacon pieces on top. Stop it. **>WEST COAST TAVERN** 2895 University Ave., North Park, 619.295.1688

65 The Taco Stand in La Jolla makes the best **grilled corn on the cob**, on a stick, ever—sprinkled with Parmesan and chili powder. **>THE TACO STAND** 621 Pearl St., La Jolla, 858.551.6666

66 The **stir-fried spicy rice noodles with veggies** at Basil Thai Bistro are a top choice for rainy nights—just the right blend of sweetness and heat. **>BASIL THAI BISTRO** 8680 Navajo Road, #104, La Mesa, 619.460.8424

67 Charley's Famous Hamburgers is just a simple, unpretentious drive-thru in Lemon Grove, but its **bacon cheeseburgers** rival the best anywhere. Add a kebab on top.

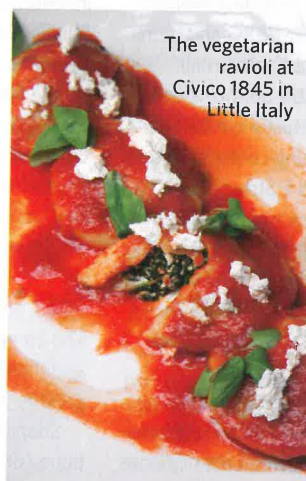
>CHARLEY'S FAMOUS HAMBURGERS 8213 Broadway, Lemon Grove, 619.460.2690

68 Speaking of the best bacon cheeseburgers, we'd be remiss if we didn't take a moment to honor world-famous Hodad's in Ocean Beach. The **double bacon cheeseburgers** are epic. **>HODAD'S** 5010 Newport Ave., Ocean Beach, 619.224.4623

69 We're convinced the **roasted poblano flatbread** at Cueva Bar—with chimichurri, mozzarella and romano cheese—is also laced with culinary crack that makes us inhale it instead of chewing it politely. (This is all your fault, Chef Osvaldo Blackaller.) **>CUEVA BAR** 2123 Adams Ave., University Heights, 619.269.6612

70 The **ground beef tacos** at Nati's (in business for more than 55 years) are more American than Mexican, but they're on the short list of dishes we'd want for our last meal. **>NATI'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT** 1852 Bacon St., Ocean Beach, 619.224.3369

71 San Diegans love their Vietnamese pho almost as much as tacos. The **beef pho** at Que Huong is better than mom's chicken soup. **>QUE HUONG** 4134 University Ave., City Heights, 619.281.6008



The vegetarian ravioli at Civico 1845 in Little Italy



The fried Baja fish tacos at Fish 101

72 Craving a salmon dish that will knock your socks off? Try Urban Solace's **sockeye salmon** rubbed in sugar and salt, with roasted lemon, zucchini purée and Yukon potato wedges. And it's plated beautifully, to boot. **>URBAN SOLACE** 3823 30th St., North Park, 619.295.6464

73 When we go to S&M: Sausage & Meat, we try all seven types of **house-made bacon**, and get a sausage board with the lamb merguez sausage. **>S&M: SAUSAGE & MEAT** 4130 Park Blvd., University Heights, 619.344.2177

74 The delicate **mignons** made daily at Pan Bon will give you a fabulous sugar fix in just a bite ... or two ... or three. **>PAN BON** 1450 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy, 619.241.2443

75 Rancho Bernardo locals rave that Brothers Provisions makes the best sandwiches they've ever had, which might be true, but we could slurp the **tomato basil soup** every day and not get tired of it. **>BROTHERS PROVISIONS** 16451 Bernardo Center Drive, Rancho Bernardo, 855.850.2767

76 BCB Company (aka Big City Bagels) in Hillcrest is our pick for best bagel shop in town. The **5th Avenue Signature Melt** is a must—oven-roasted turkey, tomato, avocado, bacon,

melted muenster cheese and a garlic-herb spread over an open-face bagel of your choice. We love the Everything Bagel.

>BCB COMPANY 1010 University Ave., Hillcrest, 619.574.7878

77 STELLA!!! Why must your **roasted Brussels sprouts** with crispy salami and shaved ricotta, lightly bathed in that tangy aranciata reduction, be so good? We'd happily eat this starter as a main course. **>STELLA PUBLIC HOUSE** 1429 Island Ave., East Village, 619.234.0808

78 What is it about the **caprese salad** with fresh heirloom tomatoes, basil, olive oil and creamy burrata at Caffè Calabria that is so insanely more delicious than other caprese salads? We may never know. **>CAFFÈ CALABRIA** 3933 30th St., North Park, 619.291.1759

79 To Blue Ocean Robata & Sushi Bar, regarding your addictive crispy, crunchy **caramelized eggplant**: Thank you. **>BLUE OCEAN ROBATA & SUSHI BAR** 2958 Madison St., Carlsbad, 760.434.4959

80 We've surpassed our taco limit with this article, but Fish 101 deserves the final bow for its **fried Baja fish tacos** with cabbage. They are simply superb. **>FISH 101** 1468 N. Coast Hwy, 101, Leucadia, 760.943.6221