



San Diego's 10 Most Important Restaurant Openings of 2016

BY DARLENE HORN | DECEMBER 19, 2016



We can't close out 2016 without looking back on the restaurants that made a mark on San Diego this year. Among our favorites are several chef-driven restaurants, San Diego's first public market with a dedicated eatery and a breakfast empire that keeps on growing. Read on for 10 restaurants that made their mark on the city and find out why we chose them as the most important San Diego restaurant openings of 2016.



Kindred

Just when you were feeling comfortable diving into vegan fare, South Park's Kindred breaks all hippie stereotypes with fearless food and decor to match. The aggressively seasoned dishes like the Memphis BBQ jackfruit sandwich plays well with the decor, featuring a four-eyed wolf head sculpture, skulls and pentagrams all set against delicate pink wallpaper.

Must-order: The Wanderer sandwich with blackened tofu, spiced red cabbage, apricot chutney and lime peptic aioli

1503 30th St.; 619-546-9653



Breakfast Republic

Breakfast got big in 2016, and the proof is in the pancakes at Johan Engman's Breakfast Republic. Since opening its North Park location last year, Breakfast Republic has expanded to two other locales (Liberty Station and Encinitas) with another two on the horizon for 2017 (East Village and Carmel Valley).

Must-order: Cinnamon roll pancakes with walnuts and cinnamon frosting

Multiple locations



Tribute Pizza

The lesson Tribute Pizza offers is that if you do something right as a pop-up, it can translate into a successful brick-and-mortar pizzeria. Founded by passionate pizza maker Matthew Lyons, this North Park restaurant slings creative combinations that harken to acclaimed pies from around the world. The restaurant also offers creations that expand beyond pizza, proving there's a captive audience hungry for new variations with delicious twists.

Must-order: Brooklyn's Best with fresh mozzarella, ricotta, caramelized onions and parsley on a sesame-seed crust

3077 N. Park Way; 619-450-4505



Mess Hall

All of the eateries at Liberty Station Market deserve to be on this list, but let's focus our attention on Mess Hall, the market's attached restaurant that sources its ingredients directly from neighboring vendors. The menu changes according to availability, and even if you're not hungry, Mess Hall works as a place to sit down, grab a beer or cocktail and do some people-watching.

Must-order: Za'atar seasoned cauliflower steak and beech mushrooms

2820 Historic Decatur Rd.; 619-255-8360



False Idol

Many places have attempted to offer the tiki bar experience, but none have come close to this gleaming example in Little Italy. The project by Consortium Holdings assaults your visual senses with top-to-bottom decor that includes skulls on stakes, petrified fish and Polynesian wood carvings. Drinks don't take a second seat to decor; concoctions mix fresh fruit juices with a variety of exotic, hard-to-find rums.

Must-order: Sidewinder's Fang, a blend of aged rum, passion fruit, lime, orange and a touch of seltzer

675 West Beech St.



Ponsaty's

We thought cute and cozy Bellamy's in Escondido was an acceptable place to house Patrick Ponsaty — one of only two master French chefs in San Diego. But now that his signature restaurant is open it's hard to believe he worked anywhere besides this stunning restaurant. The elegant fine-dining establishment is a perfect fit for the exclusive neighborhood of Rancho Santa Fe too.

Must-order: 24-hour veal cheeks with roasted shallots, candied carrot purée and Madeira wine sauce

6106 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe; 858-771-1871



Trust Restaurant

Hillcrest was in need of a serious restaurant to draw in diners and they found a champion in Trust. Located on the bottom floor of the Robinson Building, the restaurant specializes in approachable tasting menus by executive chef Brad Wise, who fuses continental cuisine with international flavors.

Must-order: Hushpuppies featuring cured ham aged for 60 days and house-cultured butter

3752 Park Blvd.; 619-795-6901



Crudo By Pascal Lorange

What does it take for a renowned NYC chef to leave the city of bright lights for San Diego? According to Pascal Lorange: love and, of course, the weather. Since opening his namesake restaurant with girlfriend Sylvie Jordain, he's placed an emphasis on serving fresh, seasonal produce. Crudo has put Carmel Valley on the map as an up-and-coming area.

Must-order: Crudo tasting that includes tuna, branzino and salmon

5965 Village Way; 858-847-2797



Herb & Wood

Executive chef and entrepreneur Brian Malarkey has had his share of wins and losses in the restaurant industry, and his venture with co-owner Chris Puffer is his crowning achievement to date. Opened in April, this luxuriously appointed Little Italy restaurant features big, bold flavors tied together with citrus, garlic or pepper notes.

Must-order: Grilled Iberico pork “Secreto,” apple mostarda, cannellini, pancetta and arugula

2210 Ketter Blvd.; 619-955-8495



Poke Anything

We're taking the easy way out as we can't deny the overarching appeal of poke, and it's impossible to pick a favorite. First wave poke-centric places such as [Poke Go](#), [San Diego Poke Co.](#) and [Pokirrito](#) have paved the way for [Poke UTC](#), [Poki One N Half](#) and incoming [Pokewan](#), and they all scratch that poke itch.

Must-order: Build-it-yourself poke

Poke Go, [3614 Fifth Ave.](#); 619-230-5549

San Diego Poke Co., [10387 Friars Rd.](#); 619-584-4786

Pokirrito, [4646 Convoy St. #101-A](#); 858-573-2400

Poke UTC, [8895 Towne Centre Dr. 109](#); 858-202-1688

Poki One N Half, [8055 Armour St.](#); 858-874-6760

Pokewan, [2958 Madison #101, Carlsbad](#); 760-720-2300