

ModernLuxury

ORANGE COUNTY



THE NEXT LIST

O.C.'S MOST INTERESTING INNOVATORS

GUGU MBATHA-RAW

THE STAR'S PATH TO HOLLYWOOD & HER INNER JOURNEY HOME

SHINE BRIGHT

EXQUISITE JEWELRY, DAZZLING MAKEUP

PLUS

A TOP CHEF STAR'S LATEST CHALLENGE

THE RITZ REBORN. LIDO MARINA VILLAGE BOWS

THE SCENE FROM O.C.'S FINEST SOIREEES!

it's a deep-fried duck-leg confit, after all—and her new short-rib taco on a blue corn gordita is yet another example of her skill. She makes the blue corn masa—widely used in Mexico City—in-house with dry kernels cooked with lime. They're then ground through the eatery's mill. *Delicioso!* Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sat. and Sun. 251 W. Pacific Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.675.9800, solcocina.com \$\$

Sota Yes, we love sushi in O.C., and the creations concocted by chef Sota Akiyama at his namesake restaurant keep us coming back for more. If you haven't been in yet (shame on you), try the Sota Pop. It's packed with salmon, tuna, shrimp, crab, mango, jicama and cilantro, all held together by sweet cucumber. Lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner daily. 3344 E. Coast Highway, Corona del Mar, 949.675.0771, sotasushi.com \$\$

Sushi Roku Fashion Island continues to serve up new additions to its dining lineup, making it a fresh-food destination for locals and visitors alike. Take Innovative Dining Group's hip yet serene sushi haunt. It has a baked crab handroll we could eat every day. It's a light iteration, with sushi rice and flavor-forward pieces of the crustacean wrapped and cooked in soy paper. (A tip: Ask for less rice for a healthier take.) Simply wonderful. Lunch and dinner daily. Fashion Island, 327 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, 949.706.3622, sushiroku.com \$\$

Taco Rosa One of the best local Sunday brunches comes courtesy of Taco Rosa, where authentic Mexi cuisine meets hand-squeezed juices and a killer margarita (with homemade sweet and sour, of course!) set in a casual, cantina-style atmosphere. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sun. 2632 San Miguel Drive, Newport Beach, 949.720.0980, tacorosa.com \$\$

Tamarind of London This palatable place is the go-to hot spot for the best in Indian cuisine and one-of-a-kind cocktails. It's spicing up the wee hours too, with its late-night happy hour menu of small bites (try the spiced potato croquettes and battered lamb skewers) and other nibbles, along with a selection of sips. It's offered Sun.-Thu., beginning at 8PM. Lunch Tue.-Sun., dinner nightly. 7862 E. Coast Highway, Newport Beach, 949.715.8338, tamarindoflondon.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—he is dishing out everything from halibut sea salt with pink peppercorn, lime and yuzu pepper to his Tuna Lovers concoction with peppercorn ahi avocado. 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, 940.660.1010, tenoc.com \$\$

Tommy Bahama's Island Grille Dine on island-inspired dishes

like the Thai shrimp and scallops, and sip tropical cocktails in a coastal-cool, laid-back environment that you'll never want to leave. Lunch and dinner daily. 854 Avocado Ave., Newport Beach, 949.760.8686, tommybahama.com \$\$

True Food Kitchen Promising delicious and nutritious dishes, this collab with wellness master Dr. Andrew Weil follows his anti-inflammatory food pyramid. The exhibition kitchen and exposed prep tables by the dining room churn out pizzas made with organic flour, spelt and flax-seed crusts; and a lovely, light Tuscan kale salad. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sat. and Sun. Fashion Island, 451 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, 949.644.2400, truefoodkitchen.com \$\$

The Waffle Affair With more than 21 waffles, this chichi place gives us ample reasons to eat breakfast all day. The shop's namesake dish is made from scratch and baked fresh to order, with traditional bites (the classic with maple syrup and whipped butter), daily specials (buttermilk chocolate chip), savory snacks (cheddar and cherry hardwood-smoked bacon) and gluten-free grub too (corncakes? Yes, please!). Breakfast and lunch daily. 1064 Bayside Drive, Newport Beach, 949.720.8155, thewaffleaffair.com \$

Wasa Sushi When we dine here, we skip the soy sauce and dollops of wasabi—the assortment of light, subtle alternatives complement, rather than camouflage, the elevated

HALF PIPE Stop by Eats for the Eleven Pipers Piping (aka a piped blueberry trifle) Dec. 22.



FESTIVE FARE

LUCKY NUMBER

'Tis the season for Christmas menus (specifically those focusing on a certain 12 days), and one of our faves comes courtesy of **Eats Kitchen & Bar** (eatskitchen.com). Dec. 12 to 23, Executive Chef Jason Montelibano will serve a dozen cheeky items to coincide with the song. "It's a fun excuse for us to celebrate... for more than just two days," he says. "Plus, who wouldn't want to put Cinnamon Toast Crunch ice cream on the menu?" The dish in question: Eight Maids a Milking (Dec. 19). Other days bring a six-spice duck breast with juniper berries, clove, black and pink peppercorns, and ginger and shitake powders (Dec. 17's Six Geese a Laying); and crispy frog legs (Dec. 21's Ten Lords a Leaping). But the hardest to dream up, he says, was Seven Swans a Swimming (Dec. 18): "There isn't a lot in the kitchen that relates to swans—so we got creative and concocted a cocktail." It's called The Swanson, after Eats' Swanson Special sip—inspired by *Parks and Recreation*, but of course—and features in-house bacon bourbon instead of Bakon vodka, Vermont maple syrup and candied bacon. So, what's in store for those who try it all? "We'll have to send them home with something special on the 12th day," says Montelibano. "Maybe it'll even be a golden ring." —KS