



## The 10 Hottest New Restaurants in San Diego

San Diego's food scene is growing faster than ever with a slew of exciting new restaurants hitting the city in the past few months. From banh mi in Kearny Mesa to a Little Italy venue serving amazing Baja-inspired cuisine, here are the 10 restaurants lighting up the local landscape right now.

### The Crack Shack



An all-day menu of chicken- and egg-based dishes – including fried chicken, chicken sandwiches and deviled eggs (plus a full bar) – are served at this corrugated-metal-clad Little Italy counter by the team behind Juniper & Ivy. Modern furnishings, a giant chicken sculpture and a bocce-ball court make the outdoor-only seating area hip and happening.

**Must-order:** Fried chicken, available in five or 10 pieces.

**Insider tip:** Work off your meal by playing bocce ball in the adjoining courtyard.



### **Bracero Cocina**

The second U.S. restaurant from Tijuana chef Javier Plascencia (Romesco), this gleaming, two-story haunt in Little Italy offers modern interpretations of Mexican cuisine (think shrimp and bone marrow sopes), along with agave-based cocktails, craft beer and wines from both California and Baja. Contemporary design meets rustic decorative touches inside the artfully composed space, with a crudo bar, an open kitchen and a terrace.

**Must-order:** Albacore Two Ways (seared and tartare).

**Insider tip:** Aim for reservations on the first floor by the kitchen for a view of Javier Plascencia at work.



## KINDRED

Contemporary cocktails and ambitious vegan eats like seared cauliflower steak, pistachio-crusted tofu and cookie-dough truffles are served at this eccentric South Park hangout with an all-death-metal soundtrack. The whimsical space features off-the-wall decor that blends vintage design with modern pieces (including a giant sculpture of a mythical wolf-beast).

**Must-order:** Memphis BBQ Jackfruit sandwich.

**Insider tip:** The restaurant is still in its soft-opening phase, so look for adjustments to the menu.



## **Biga**

Italian standards (such as Neapolitan-style pizzas, rustic wood-fired small plates and focaccia – plus locally roasted coffee) are highlighted at this fast-casual locale with contemporary décor and an open kitchen.

**Must-order:** Chicken skin sandwich.

**Insider tip:** Any pizza on the menu can be transformed into a frita pizza, a double-crust creation that's deep-fried until golden.



### **Grand Ole BBQ Y Asado**

Slow-smoked Central Texas–style BBQ (and Argentine-style grilled meat on Sundays) delights hardcore carnivores at this casual North Park hangout. Picnic tables provide comfortable seating for dine-in visitors in the all-outdoor space. P.S. There’s no beer or liquor on-site, but BYOB is welcome.

**Must-order:** Tri tip, either in sandwich form or à la carte by the pound.

**Insider tip:** It's BYOB, so if you're not in the mood for soda, come prepared with wine or beer.



### **Baguette Bros**

This casual counter in Kearny Mesa specializes in affordable banh mi sandwiches with Asian-fusion flavors, along with topped fries and chicken wings.

**Must-order:** Bulgogi fries.

**Insider tip:** Check the chalkboard by the door for the access to the restaurant's free Wi-Fi.



### **Ike's Place**

The Hillcrest outpost of the casual and affordable San Francisco–based sandwich chain offers a vast menu of hefty sandwiches (including vegan options and several local exclusives).

**Must-order:** Junior Seau sandwich, a Hillcrest exclusive.

**Insider tip:** There are hundreds upon hundreds of secret sandwiches not listed on the menu but available to order. For the complete sandwich lineup, visit the [website](#) of the original location in San Francisco.



### **Galaxy Taco**

Chef-partner Trey Foshee (George's at the Cove) goes casual at this La Jolla Mexican joint, using local produce in Baja-style eats like ceviche tostadas and lamb barbacoa tacos accompanied by south-of-the-border-inspired cocktails and a sizable tequila and mezcal selection. Located a few blocks from the ocean, the airy space has a beachy feel, with a vibrant corn mural and a heated patio featuring rainbow-colored tables.

**Must-order:** Carne asada taco.

**Insider tip:** Take advantage of the \$28 tasting menu that includes ceviche, a taco, Benchmark Galaxy lager and 1 oz. of Montelobos mezcal.





### **Breakfast Republic**

Breakfast is the name of the game at this hip North Park joint serving up inventive plates like s'mores French toast and Vietnamese chicken wing bowls that you'll want to eat well beyond the morning hours (and luckily, you can). The sunny digs feature two patios and a bar supplying kombucha on tap, beer flights and playful cocktails bound to kick-start your day better than a bowl of oatmeal.

**Must-order:** Pancake flight.

**Insider tip:** Weekend brunches are always buzzing with wait times up to an hour long. Reservations are not accepted so come early.



### **Copa Vida**

Expert baristas employ an arsenal of high-tech equipment to brew the best possible cups of coffee or tea at this sophisticated East Village cafe. The spacious, modern setting features a cafe menu of light bites, and encompasses a roomy sidewalk patio, an honor bar for those who seek a quick fix and slow bar centered around coffee appreciation and education.

**Must-order:** Vanilla latte.

**Insider tip:** Working at the cafe during the weekdays is encouraged with unlimited access to free Wi-Fi. You're out of luck on the weekends when it's cut off from 9 AM to 3 PM.