



SMOKE ALERT A Skittles cordial? You bet. El Biz chef Ryan Grant doesn't stay in the kitchen. His tableside cocktails—which often involve liquid nitrogen and fire—are setting the sleepy suburbs abuzz. Let's hope he stays.

Best In-Water Dining

Sure we'd like to update **The Marine Room's** interior. But we dug the '80s, too. As long as those pane glass windows stay and BP doesn't drill nearby, they're just fine. The only way to get a better view of La Jolla Cove is by kayak. Plus, chef Bernard Guillas has resuscitated one of his old hits that we love anew: curry escargot with lily bulbs, Serrano ham and a macadamia crust, served in a casserole. 2000 *Spindrift Dr.*, 858.459.7222, marineroom.com.

Best Religion

"What Would **The Linkery** Do?" is the mantra of locavores looking to sustainably solve their omnivorous dilemmas. The hourly-morphing menu of carcass master Max Bonacci—spawned from the wares of 40-plus artisans, not counting the booze—has inspired a cult following that rivals a certain Berkeley haven. "We're eating on principle. We believe this is the best way to do this thing," says owner Jay Porter. "People who aren't into a community effort can eat and work somewhere else." House-

made sausages and a luscious Berkshire pork belly are staples. July's must-try? Summer squash nuggets battered in Hot Rocks Lager and dipped in mustard jalapeño sauce. They're what green-minded millionaires would eat if they had their own county fair. 3794 30th St., 619.255.8778, thelinkery.com.

Best Near Convoy

Every server in **Robota-ya Oton** is female, and each is a genetic aurora. Anti-discrimination's loss is Japanese businessmen's gain (*oton* means "dad," after all). This year-old hole in the wall is the finer-dining experience from the owners of **Wa Dining Okan** (3860 Convoy St., okanus.com), one of Convoy's best. It's six semi-private rooms (shoes off, *gaujin*) separated by *shoji* screens with the best home-style Japanese food—Nisshin soba noodles, miso cod, *sukiyaki* hot pots dipped in raw egg—south of Leucadia's Yu Me Ya. This is where Japanese super-farmer Tom Chino eats (explains the Chino salad). Sign? What sign? Trust us—it's between Denny's and Shogun. And it won't be cheap. 5447 Kearney Villa Rd., 858.277.3989.

BEST NEW CHEF

Another year, another **El Bizcocho** chef. Hopefully Ryan Grant—an NYC transplant who begged Jean-Georges Vongerichten for a job, got it and milked it—will stick. The man is afflicted with creativity. Proof? His "B.L.T.": bluefin toro with pressed olive toast, basil aioli, purple Cherokee tomatoes, saffron rouille, taggiasca olive powder, basil chips, applewood bacon, smoked tomato vinaigrette, butter lettuce hearts and ice wine vinegar. A potential idea mess turned into palate gold. Dude is dangerous. Find him. 17550 Bernardo Oaks Dr., 858.675.8550, ranchobernardoinn.com.

Best Francs

Cafe Chloe For cuisine and hungry-poets charm, you can't beat the 1,300-square-foot Chloe. Chef Katie Grebow doesn't cook light, but she cooks so damn well. Whether it's the mac 'n' cheese, the asparagus and bufala tart or her mussels, Grebow has been a star in the making for a while. After an especially impressive year, consider her made. 721 9th Ave.,

619.232.3242, cafechloe.com.

Mistral We were ready to write off Loews Coronado's signature restaurant as an economic casualty. But with the return of Master French Chef Marc



It's the small details that make tiny Cafe Chloe ooze charm.

Ehrler and his hiring of chef de cuisine Patrick Ponsaty, Mistral is now making the best high-end French food in San Diego, bar none. 4000 Coronado Bay Rd., 619.424.4000, loewshotels.com.

Mille Fleurs The menu might as well read "First course, Martin Woesle. Second course, Martin Woesle." The star Rancho Santa Fe chef is one of the few Chino Farms regulars, and he continues to wow decades into his service. We could name specific dishes (wiener schnitzel!), but suffice it to say, "Third course—Martin Woesle." 6009 Paseo Delicias, 858.756.3085, millefleurs.com.

Best Happy Hour

October 15. Mark it down. That's stone crab season kick off, which is **Truluck's** calling card. Mondays' bottomless crab (\$50-\$70) is a steal for high-end pinchers (Jonah crab during offseason). And nightly happy hours are half-off cocktails and apps (get the crab cakes). The piano lounge and red, half-shell banquettes make us feel like we're high-living on the Titanic without all the screaming and drowning. 8990 University Center Ln., 858.453.2583, trulucks.com.

Best Casual Mex

Ask S.D.'s top toques for real-deal Mexican food and they'll answer **Super Cocina**. Sure, the neighborhood looks like a good place to get shot. But inside,

round mothers tend to huge kettles, churning out a handful of their 150-plus recipes each day. The enchiladas? Amazing. It's all about the sauces here, and it's not low fat. Owner Pablo Sanchez hands out free samples and regulars can call the night before to request favorite dishes. 3627 University Ave., 619.584.6244.

Best Chinese

Finding good Chinese in S.D. is like finding a good man at Glenn Beck's house. But locals and pro jockeys know the secret of **Del Mar Rendezvous**. Their massive walnut shrimp with sticky cream sauce is phenomenal. The place is swarmed Wednesdays or Sundays for half-price wine. 1555 Camino Del Mar, 858.755.2669, delmarrendezvous.com.