

Chickens on the Run:
Hiding in the 'burbs

23 Things to
Do in June

Amy Finley on Quitting
the Food Network

SAN DIEGO

MAGAZINE

Best 2011 Restaurants

125 Places to Chow Down



The Battle for Bait
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7 Reasons to Grow
Your Own Food Now

Shaun Phillips:
Cheese Lover

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Critic's Picks By Candice Woo

Food for Thought

Taking on my first Best Restaurant list for the magazine was a challenge; superlatives are always tricky, especially with food. Taste is obviously first and foremost, but we all know there are other factors to consider when choosing favorite eating establishments; dining, after all, is not just the act of moving food from fork to mouth. Restaurant experiences, and how they linger in your memory, can be affected by a number of factors—from your eating companions to how warmly you're welcomed.

Case in point: I wavered between two spots for the Best Sushi category. While Kaito Sushi in Encinitas performs some undeniably incredible artistry with seafood—leagues beyond most—my meals at the bar at Sushi Ota have nearly always felt just as transcendent, and the place has more of a hold in my personal culinary history. I had to select one over the other for the list, but when asked this same question out in the field, both names tumble out nearly simultaneously.

If you see some new-to-you names on my list, I hope you'll give them a try, and let me know what you think at candicew@sandiegomagazine.com. And if the readers' picks don't jibe with your own, make sure to cast your vote next year.

Eat well!

BEST OF THE BEST
Blanca

BEST HAPPY HOUR
Oyster Happy Hour at Oceanaire

BEST CHEAP EATS
K Sandwiches

BEST NEW RESTAURANT
Blue Ribbon Artisan Pizzeria

BEST CHEF
Jeff Jackson, A.R. Valentien

BEST SERVICE
Cafe Chloe

BEST VIEW
George's California Modern

BEST LATE-NIGHT MENU
Starlite

BEST HOTEL RESTAURANT
A.R. Valentien

BEST WINE LIST
Addison

BEST SOMMELIER
Jesse Rodriguez

BEST BEER SELECTION
Blind Lady Ale House

BEST KID-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT
Tender Greens

MOST ROMANTIC
Wine Vault

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANT
Alchemy

MOST DECADENT DESSERTS
Opera Patisserie

BEST PIZZA
Pizzeria Bruno Napoletano

BEST BURGER
Nine-Ten

BEST AMERICAN
Market

BEST FRENCH
Tapenade

BEST SMALL PLATES MENU
Wa-Dining Okan

BEST ITALIAN
Bencotto

BEST INDIAN
Surati Farsan

BEST CHINESE
China Max

BEST SUSHI
Sushi Ota

BEST THAI
Original Sab-E-Lee

BEST ASIAN FUSION
Roppongi

BEST MEXICAN
Super Cocina

BEST GREEK
Cafe Athena

BEST VIETNAMESE
Que Huong

BEST VEGETARIAN
Spread

BEST BARBECUE
Coop's BBQ

BEST STEAKHOUSE
Cowboy Star

BEST SEAFOOD
The Fishery

BEST BREAKFAST
Claire's on Cedros

BEST SUNDAY BRUNCH
Farm House Cafe

BEST BUSINESS LUNCH
Grant Grill

BEST DELI
Mona Lisa Italian Foods

BEST TAKEOUT
Miho Gastrotruck

BEST OUTDOOR DINING
1500 Ocean at Hotel del Coronado

BEST ETHIOPIAN
Asmara

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN
Ali-Baba

BEST KOREAN
Buga Korean BBQ

BEST CATERER
Waters

BEST BUSINESS LUNCH
Grant Grill

