



## Five New Restaurants To Visit This Weekend

by Keri Bridgwater



*Where to drink and dine on your days off.*

It's finally Friday, which means it's almost time to clock off and get those weekend vibes started. No plans yet? No problem! Eater's here with a handy set of recommendations to assist in your dining destination decision-making. In this regular feature we'll help you discover recently opened restaurants and uncover new-to-you bars and eateries (plus occasional new menu debuts) specializing in everything from Friday happy hour cocktails through to Sunday brunch, so you can make the most of that hard-earned downtime.

## Wood-Fired Pizzas & Italian Eats: Biga



Fast-casual concept **BIGA**, which soft opened just before New Year, brings affordable artisanal Italian fare to the downtown lunch and dinner crowd in the form of \$7-and-up Neopolitan-style pizzas, bruschettas, wood-fired dishes and more. They've got breakfast covered too with coffee courtesy of **Bird Rock Roasters** and hearty \$8 polenta bowls, including chive smashed fingerling potatoes, 140-degree egg and smoked salmon. 950 6th Ave. (619) 794-0444 [Photo: Lyudmila Zotova]

## Casual Counter Service: Encontro



North Park's latest dining addition is making a name for itself with seasonal chef-driven dishes and striking Paul Basile-designed space, not to mention a nifty walk-up window for easy ordering. Expect a carefully curated selection of eats including salmon, chicken and lamb-filled sandwiches, salads and a plethora of sides like grilled little gems and portabello fries. A rotating selection of craft beer, plus wine, sangria and sodas should quench your thirst. 3001 University Ave. (619) 291-1220 [Photo: Lyudmila Zotova]



## Cuban & Caribbean Eats: Havana Grill



This new traditional Cuban counter-service spot from **Sandra Cardet** has proved a big hit with Clairemont residents since soft opening in early December. While her signature lechón dish (\$12) of slowly roasted pork marinated Cuban spices, and fricassee de pollo garnered plenty of positive Yelp reviews, the hot-pressed El Cubano sandwich is also a must-try. Sides and appetizers include empanadas, papas rellenas and sweet plantains; for drinks popular Cuban sodas *Ironbeer* and the mate-based *Materva* grace the menu alongside coffees and craft sodas. 5450 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. (858) 430-6878 [Photo: Facebook]

## Winter Menu Additions: Stake Chophouse & Bar



Executive chef **Tim Kolanko** made some recent new additions to his winter menu at this Crown Island favorite and regular fixture on Eater's Essential 38. A lobster wonton soup to start balances sweet, salty, spicy and sour; while a Hawaiian blue snapper with Beluga lentils, plus fresh local catch with red wine reduction are two new entrees in the seafood section. Last but not least, executive pastry chef **Francis Laureano** has whipped up carrot cake with apple cider frosting and butterscotch caramel for dessert. 1309 Orange Ave. (619) 522- 0077 [Photo: Blue Bridge Hospitality]



## New Sunday Brunch Menu: 100 Wines



**Chef Zaz** will be launching her brand new brunch menu on **Sunday, January 17** at this European style bistro bar in Hillcrest. Notable additions include 'piggy pancakes' with carnitas and caramelized sweet apples, coffee cake French toast, and a finger licking bacon roll with candied walnuts and maple glaze. Juicy mimosas for \$1, sparkling lavender lemonade, and Beau Bellinis are just a few Sunday Funday tipples. 1027 University Ave. (619) 491-0100 [Photo: Cohn Restaurant Group]