



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]