

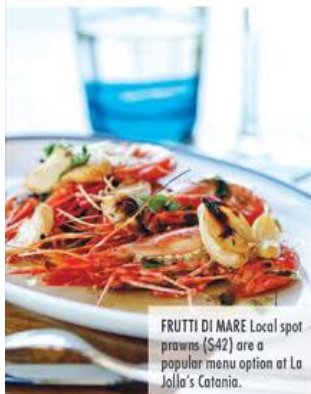
CULINARY WANDERLUST

ARE YOU HANKERING FOR A TASTE BUD WAKEUP CALL, PERHAPS SOME OCTOPUS PASTRAMI, RABBIT TENDERLOIN, PORK BELLY BUNS OR GARLICKY ESCARGOT? WELL, TURN UP THE TRAVELING MUSIC, BECAUSE IT'S TIME TO HIT THE ROAD AS WE PRESENT A COAST-TO-COAST GUIDE TO THE MOST EXCITING NEW DINING VENUES IN THE COUNTRY THE HOTTEST TABLES IN CITIES NEAR AND FAR. BON VOYAGE AND BON APPETIT!

By The Modern Luxury Editors with Lesley Balla, Bonnie Davidson, Amy Finley, Stephanie Hunt and Valerie Jarvie

ASIAN ALLURE At Chicago's Momotaro, the watch words are attention to detail— even down to superb housemade tofu in the steaming imperial wagyu sukiyaki (\$32).

ON/OFF PHOTOGRAPHY BY GUY AROCH



FRUTTI DI MARE Local spot prawns (\$42) are a popular menu option at La Jolla's Catania.

SAN DIEGO CATANIA

Between high-brow cultural institutions and the neighborhood's stone's-throw proximity to San Diego's billion-dollar biotech hub, La Jolla has long had the bones to be a buzzy dining destination for the area's elite. But it took Catania—brainchild of rising restaurateur Arturo Kassel—to actualize that potential. Anchoring Girard Avenue's new Moroccan-style La Plaza building, the venue serves up sunny, coastal Italian dishes of elegant simplicity. The oft-changing menu by chef Vince Schofield includes spit-roasted meats (market price), wood-fired Neapolitan pizzas (from \$14), impeccable seafood (don't miss the charred

local spot prawns, \$42) and the restaurant's signature smoked-duck liver mousse (\$13) on Sadie Rose bread. Pair that silky dish (foie gras accounts for its voluptuous richness) with a high-acid wine, like a 2011 Tenuta Sant'Antonio Amarone della Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy (\$91), 7863 Girard Ave., Ste. 301, 858.551.5105, wnlhosp.com

TABLE-HOPPING Spot museum trustees and art-world luminaries, like Lynda Forsha (curator of the private Jacobs collection), Ben Strauss-Maloom and Mark Quint (Quint Gallery), and architect Jennifer Luce, dining on the breezy patio.

POWER MOVE Regulars forego the scramble for Friday night reservations, instead booking an early table. Why? Chef Schofield, on request, will go off-menu, creating memorable one-off dishes for those who know to ask.



SHELL GAME The chef's mussels (\$16), served with a prosecco-aji amarillo broth and pickled peppers and garlic, from Aspen's Grey Lady.

ASPEN GREY LADY

Inspired by summers in Nantucket, this seafood bistro incongruously opened in the dead of last winter and quickly became a go-to spot for crustacean-craving Aspenites. Executive Chef Kathleen Crook gets raves for dishes like the decadent lobster carbonara (\$35) and small plates like salty, full-bodied Damariscotta oysters (\$3 each) and flavorful Thai shrimp corncakes (\$15). Co-owner Ryan Chadwick's uncle is a Maine lobsterman, and he overnights his catch daily. In fact, it's the huge, meaty lobster roll (market price) that really satisfies the landlocked population; made from a whole steamed crustacean and served on a buttery bun from Annette's Mountain Bake Shop, along with a hefty side of Old Bay-seasoned fries and housemade pickles, it's like an instant trip to the ocean. Accompany it with a bottle of 2010 Bouchard Père et Fils Chardonnay Beaune du Chateau Blanc, France (\$95), 305 S. Mill St., 970.925.1797, greyladyaspen.com

TABLE-HOPPING Grey Lady attracts a younger crowd of locals and visitors, like NFL quarterback Johnny Manziel.

POWER MOVE Savvy locals know that come 10:30PM or so most Thursday through Saturday nights, a DJ starts spinning tunes, and the restaurant morphs into an informal lounge and dance club.

ORANGE COUNTY TWENTY EIGHT DINE & DRINK

Chef Shirley Chung's immense talent (she's a star from Bravo's *Top Chef: New Orleans* who honed her skills at top restaurants like Bouchon, Guy Savoy, Carnevino and China Poblano) gives rise to a new Orange County restaurant standout. The menu is ever-changing—she buys much of her seafood from the Dory fishermen who cast lines off the shores of Newport Beach—but you'll always find modern, edgy cuisine with California-centric ingredients and Chung's whimsical twist. To wit: a yellowfin tuna salad (\$18) made from seasonal fresh catch, and rich braised pork in a mouthwatering sauce served with scissor-cut noodles (\$15), the latter accompanied by the 2013

Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$72). And you'll always find the twice-cooked pork belly buns (\$8) on the menu—they're Chung's favorite comfort food. Team them with Yangling beer (\$7) and you'll be in comfort food-and-drink heaven. 19530 Jamboree Road, Irvine, 949.852.2828, twentyeightoc.com

TABLE-HOPPING Robin Leach flew in from Vegas just to dine here. And you may spot a few of the "Real Housewives" to boot.

POWER MOVE Ask about the secret menu. Some regulars even have earned a special right: The day's secret menu on edible paper. After they read it, they have to eat it.



SLEEK AND SAVORY Celeb chef Shirley Chung's Twenty Eight attracts Orange County diners hungry for inventive elegance.

CATANIA PHOTOS BY JOHN DOLE; TWENTY EIGHT DINE & DRINK PHOTOS BY JOHN DOLE; GREY LADY PHOTOS BY NICOLE BAKER