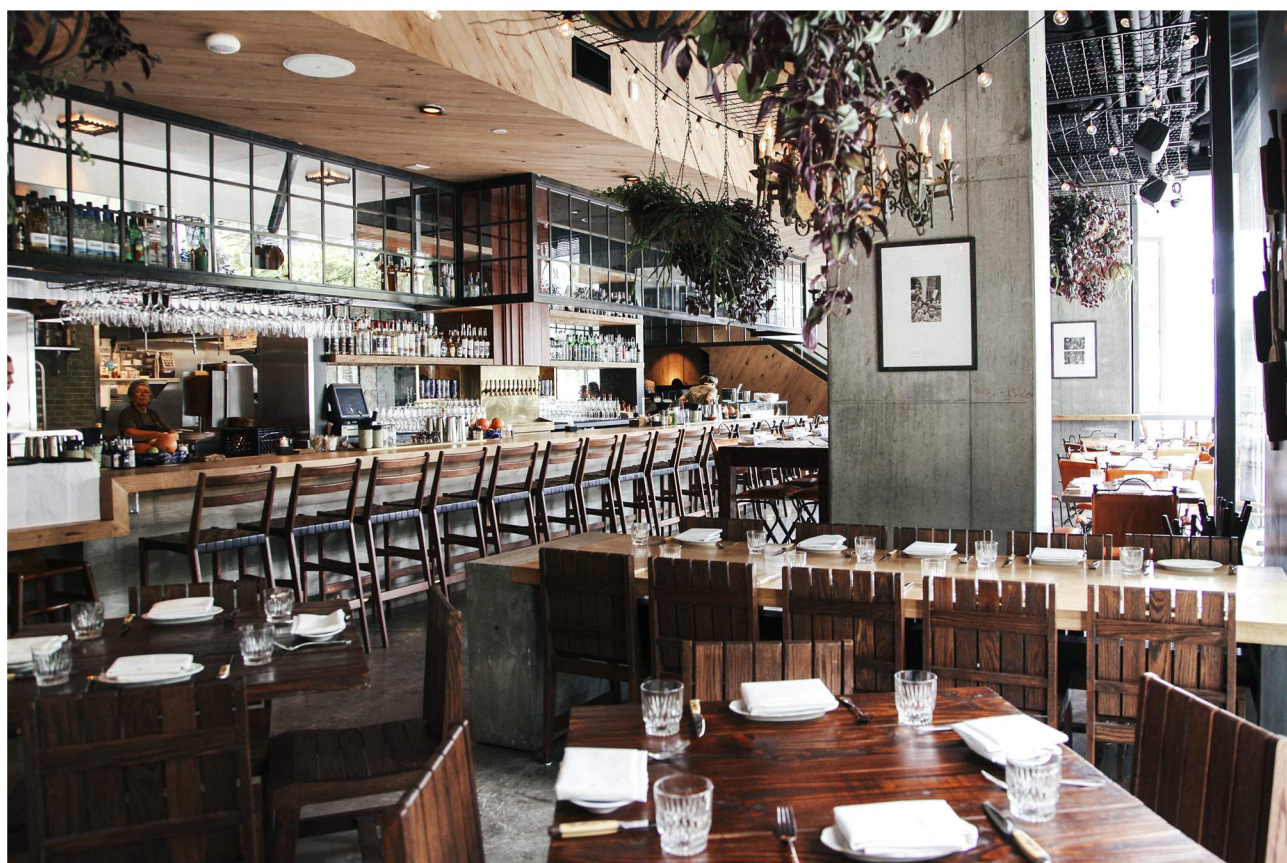


# Places: San Diego

Jennie Nunn • December 21, 2016



Bracero Cocina de Raiz

San Diego isn’t just about surfing, beachcombing, and the boardshort and flip flop-clad set. The design-minded oceanfront city is the second largest in California with numerous universities (think University of California, San Diego and University of San Diego), three major sports teams, and a slew of new and recently revamped hotels and restaurants. In fact, notes Bruce Ford of Lodging Econometrics, the city has an active construction pipeline of 41 projects with 8,400 rooms. “Existing there’s about 484 hotels with 62,860 rooms, so if you built everything in the pipeline, that’s about 18 percent growth, which is in the higher end of the spectrum,” he says.

Projects in the works include a hotel housed in a 1920s former YMCA Beaux-Arts building by West Hollywood-based designer Thomas Schoos (who also completed Herringbone and Searsucker restaurants for chef Brian Malarkey in La Jolla and downtown San Diego), and Atlanta firm tvsdesign is helping craft a massive, \$107 million investment into downtown’s Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina’s meeting and events space with the addition of more than 280,000 square feet of venues, including two of the largest ballrooms on the West Coast. A massive Swarovski chandelier in the grand ballroom features more than 400,000 individual crystals, and a landscaped walkway includes two public pieces by Los Angeles-based art collective After Architecture.

But it’s the city’s famed culinary scene that’s a major attraction, with notable chefs and owners such as Malarkey and his latest venture, Herb & Wood in Little Italy. “The restaurant scene is moving in a great direction in San Diego,” says Gina Champion-Cain, CEO of American National Investments/the Patio Group and owner of new restaurant Fireside by the Patio. “The past five years there have been restaurateurs and hospitality groups developing different restaurant concepts [with] one common theme—the bounty of the Pacific, produce from local farmers, and purchasing plate and glassware from local craftsmen.” Brian Miller, CEO of local hospitality group Eat.Drink.Sleep agrees: “There’s an ongoing trend in both travel and culinary to strip away fussiness,” he says, adding that doesn’t mean travelers don’t want luxury, but rather “they want that luxury to feel authentic and friendly. San Diego naturally benefits from this trend because it’s always had a laidback, cool aesthetic.”

Here’s a look, by neighborhood, at some of San Diego’s latest design-forward hotels and restaurants.

## Gaslamp Quarter

Pendry Hotels, the new luxury lifestyle brand from Montage Hotels & Resorts, will make its much-anticipated debut in San Diego in the center of the city’s downtown restaurant and nightlife area, steps away from Petco Park stadium and the convention center. It’s a fitting location for the SoCal-based company. “We were looking for the right market and the right neighborhood, and fortuitously came across an amazing development site that, at the time, was a parking lot right in the middle of the Gaslamp Quarter,” explains Michael Fuerstman, Pendry’s co-founder and creative director. Occupying almost an entire city block, the hotel, with the lobby and lobby bar Fifth & Rose (featuring a rich stone and black and white palette with crimson details), 317 guestrooms (including 36 suites), rooftop lounge the Pool House, and spa crafted by Houston- and New York-based Rottet Studio, also includes restaurant and marketplace Provisional Kitchen, Café & Mercantile, designed in collaboration with Raan and Lindsay Parton from Los Angeles’ Alchemy Works retail concept. Other F&B venues designed by Toronto-based Studio Munge include seasonal restaurant Lionfish, which is swathed in wood and brass; intimate basement cocktail bar Oxford Social Club, which will feature plush seating and art installations for a home-like setting; and Nason’s Beer Hall—one of the first of its kind for the city. “We’re creating something locally bred,” adds Andy Masi, CEO of Clique Hospitality, which is developing and managing Lionfish, the Pool House, and Oxford. “The soul of Pendry is uniquely San Diego.”

As a nod to the city’s early Spanish roots, the architecture of the city’s Balboa Park, and its location near the ocean, San Francisco-based Paletteur recently renovated the 237 rooms at the Kimpton Solamar San Diego with eggplant-hued ostrich leather headboards, chevron-patterned bedside tables, geometric gold wallpaper, faceted gold lamps, and black and white bathrooms that feature surfboard-shaped vanity mirrors and a brocade wallcovering. In the lobby, mirror and glass tiles, glass pendant lights, and gold tones add sparkle and movement, referencing the sea and sun. Overall, the design reflects the “casual Southern California lifestyle with a bit of bohemian flair,” says principal David Lasker. “We infused the palette with youthful colors and finishes that reflect the vibrancy of the Gaslamp Quarter.”

And the ONE Group’s modern steakhouse STK now has a new home at the Andaz downtown, complete with a bar and lounge area, raised dining platforms, and the brand’s signature central DJ booth. Outfitted with a black and white palette, white brick walls (another brand standard) done in a pixelated pattern, gold wire cluster lighting, and abstract neon wall installations, the entire space doubles as an art gallery with a rotating collection of work by visionary designers and independent artists native to San Diego and Southern California, says Jesse MacDougall, director of strategy and brand development at design firm ICRAVE, a longtime ONE Group collaborator.

## Little Italy

Kettner Boulevard has transformed from a longtime tourist spot to one of the city’s most popular dining destinations with a long list of eateries headed up by celebrity chefs including Richard Blais’ Juniper & Ivy (crafted by Atlanta’s the Johnson Studio at Cooper Carry) and the Crack Shack, plus Top Chef rising star Giselle Wellman’s coastal-inspired Pacific Standard—a concept by T2 and developers New School housed in an Art Deco building with coastal chic interiors by local firm Delawie featuring handblown glass light fixtures, white marble countertops, chevron-print leather barstools, and two 16-foot long natural walnut live edge communal tables. Also recently opened is chef Javier Placencia’s Spanish Colonial-style Bracero Cocina de Raiz, designed by LA firm Bells & Whistles with a nod to the U.S.’s 1942 bracero program, complete with a bracero hat installation, antique farm tools, and vintage items sourced from Mexico.