



The Best Of
Southern California

Unique Dining

*You are guaranteed
to have a one-of-
a-kind dining
experience.*



www.TravelCostaMesa.com

Whether you're looking for something new in regard to décor, cuisine, ambiance, or simply a different kind of restaurant experience, check out some of Orange County's most unique dining locations. There is an assortment of unparalleled opportunities within 5 to 10 miles of South Coast Plaza. With a wide variety of food options, as well as the diversity of the various settings, you are guaranteed to have a one-of-a-kind dining experience.



Rainforest Café

714.424.9200

3333 Bristol Street., Costa Mesa
www.rainforestcafe.com

Rainforest Café combines good food with entertainment and education. Every 12 minutes an audio-animatronic display of wild animals "comes to life", and every 18 minutes the entire establishment experiences a "thunderstorm." Rainforest Café offers all the best comfort foods: meatloaf, fried chicken, pot roast or even vegetarian lasagna, along with a wide selection of appetizers, burgers and salads. There's a catch-of-the-day along with ribs, steak, pork chops and salmon. A mouth-watering array of desserts, including the famous Coconut Bread Pudding, tops off the meal. Less hungry guests can just order up an exotic cocktail or fresh juice smoothie from the bar. This bar evokes a sense of calm, as guests find themselves surrounded by the dazzling color and hypnotic motion of hundreds of tropical fish.

Mastro's Steakhouse

714.546.7405

633 Anton Boulevard, Costa Mesa
www.azeats.com/mastros

Maestro's is lined with walls of towering onyx wine bottles and dramatic fabrics. Linger over cocktails or flavored martinis and live jazz in the lounge, or step into the two-story dining space where waiters in tuxedos tend to diners in high-backed chairs. In addition to cuts of aged and marinated meats, the menu offers imaginative add-ons like gorgonzola mac and cheese, steak sashimi and crab-stuffed mushrooms.

Memphis Café

714.432.7685

2920 Bristol Street, Costa Mesa
www.memphiscafe.com

This small, dimly-lit tavern is elegant despite its divey exterior. Inside, a bartender in a white cowboy hat mixes up stiff drinks for regulars while couples cozy up to warm heaters on the candlelit patio. The restaurant's minimalist 60's decor and selection of music are two of the reasons why Memphis is so popular, but the main reason for its reputation is the food: it's simple, inexpensive and good. The menu is full of modern takes on Southern soul food: gumbo, shellfish jambalaya, catfish dishes and pulled-pork sandwiches. Memphis Café also offers such basics as spicy hamburgers, filling salads and BLTs.

Antonello Ristorante

714.751.7153

3800 South Plaza Drive, Santa Ana
www.antonello.com

Antonello Ristorante has captured the essence of Old World authenticity with a new cuisine - Cucina Nostalgica Italiana. The authentically Italian dishes, made with freshest ingredients, are created by Executive Chef Barone with occasional assistance from Cagnolo's mother, Mama Pina, whose influence is ever-present, whatever the inspired selection on the menu.



Morton's Steakhouse

714.444.4834

1641 West Sunflower Avenue, Santa Ana
www.mortons.com

For almost 30 years, Morton's has served only the finest quality foods, featuring USDA prime-aged beef, fresh fish and seafood, hand-picked produce, delicious appetizers and elegant desserts.

The servers strive to provide unparalleled hospitality to each and every guest. They are not happy until each guest's filet is perfect, their lobster succulent and their vegetables steaming.

Rich mahogany, crisp linens and outstanding service combined with the superior product and the dedicated people at Morton's create an experience guests don't soon forget.

Ambrosia

714.550.0811

801 North Main Street, Santa Ana
www.ocpavillion.com

Culinary decadence awaits in the world-class Ambrosia Restaurant as Executive Chef Michael Rossi creates a menu celebrating the Seasonal Marketplace. Visitors can experience tableside flambé and live entertainment during both lunch and dinner services.

Cuisine that embraces the special bounty of each season is available, offering the freshest fruits, vegetables and entrees to create a dynamic balance between food and the finest wines. A brick-domed, intimate Wine Cellar offers rare vintages of fine wines from around the world, as well as incredible tableside services including flambé desserts, shrimp scampi and other tableside specials.

In addition to the sumptuous leather booths, opulent Spiegelau crystal, foot cushions and long-stemmed roses for the ladies, performances around the baby grand piano are a guest favorite.

The Golden Truffle

949.645.9858

1767 Newport Boulevard, Costa Mesa
www.goldentruffle.com

Chef owner of The Golden Truffle, Alan Greely, began as a caterer. The restaurant seems in appearance and atmosphere to be Bistro-esque, but those who have experienced the food realize that the Chef has taken a road less traveled. The Chef's myriad influences, with France, Spain, the Caribbean and Asia leading the way, conspire to produce dishes that manage to combine simplicity and comfort with dazzling, complex flavors and colorful presentations.

The Golden Truffle achieves that perennial ambition of most restaurants: satisfying customers of all tastes, serving up adventurous cuisine alongside nostalgic homages to home cooking.

La Cave

949.646.7944

1695 Irvine Avenue at 17th Street, Costa Mesa
www.lacaverestaurant.com

Hipsters made a major discovery when they found an underground steakhouse where uniformed waitresses wheel raw beef to the table. Located down a flight of stairs, La Cave is known for its cave-like darkness, red Naugahyde booths and stiff drinks. For four decades, it has been catering to old-fashioned diners, but that changes at 10:00 p.m. when the back room turns speakeasy with live jazz and even livelier flirting. Check out Las Vegas-style acts like the Frank Sinatra impersonator.

Leave decision-making skills at home. There's no menu, just a tableside cart from which to choose the entree. There are various cuts of beef including certified Black Angus prime rib, filet mignon or opt for seafood like Alaskan king crab. The steaks are tasty and so is the famous garlic cheese bread. It comes out hot and will be fought over by all. The Monday night special can't be beat: a prime-rib dinner for \$19.95 per person, including salad and dessert. The thick carrot cake with gobs of cream cheese frosting is also a great catch. La Cave is the perfect night out for retro-obsessed twenty-somethings or those who actually grew up with Old Blue Eyes.

Beach Pitt BBQ

949.645.7427

1676 Tustin Avenue, Costa Mesa
www.beachpitbbq.com

Once being drafted by the Baltimore Orioles, Tim DeCinces was able to taste the various culinary cultures of our country. He fell in love with, not only the taste of true, wood-smoked southern BBQ, but also the hospitality and comfort that came with it.

Traditionally, meat is smoked with either Hickory or Mesquite wood, which can leave a harsh aftertaste. Adding other wood such as Pecan can help soften the Hickory or Mesquite as well as bring additional flavor. The unique blend of wood and spices is unlike anything Southern Californians have ever tasted before!

House Specialties include hand pulled-pork (not the chopped mush many are used to), full pork ribs, chicken and real banana pudding. Beach Pit BBQ brings southern hospitality and a unique dining experience to Orange County.



Newport Beach Brewing Company

2920 Newport Boulevard, Newport Beach
www.nbbrewco.com

949.675.8449

As its name suggests, this bustling brewery/restaurant—housed in a landmark building in the historic cannery district—is less prized for its large, no-holds-barred, perfectly passable American menu than the assortment of house brews it has on tap: Newport Beach Blonde, Kirk's Wicked Wheat and John Wayne Imperial Stout are among the more enigmatic favorites. The hip, upbeat music and rustic saloon-style décor rate highly with locals and tourists. Notable side draws: weeknight happy hours, monthly beer-tasting seminars and plentiful on-site parking. Newport Beach Brewing Company offers the best patio dining while maintaining a socially comfortable environment.

The Ritz Restaurant

880 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach
www.ritzrestaurant.com

949.720.1800

For 25 years, The Ritz Restaurant and Garden has been the place to go for those who appreciate fine food and wine served in an atmosphere of refined elegance.

The Ritz Restaurant is an upscale eatery that offers a European dining experience, one where patrons can linger over a splendid meal in total comfort. The Ritz has five private dining rooms, each with its own distinctive decor and personality. The Ritz is synonymous with elegance, gracious service and award-winning cuisine.

Villa Nova

3131 West Coast Highway, Newport Beach
www.villanovarestaurant.com

949.642.7880

Villa Nova has been a Southern California dining tradition since 1933. Originally located on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, Villa Nova's famous clientele has included Charlie Chaplin, Bing Crosby, John Wayne and Dean Martin to name a few. It was at Villa Nova that Joe DiMaggio took Marilyn Monroe on a blind date and where Vincent Minelli proposed to Judy Garland.

In the late 1960's "The Strip" had lost its glamour so the restaurant moved to the current location on beautiful Newport Harbor. Since that time, Villa Nova has become a landmark establishment in Newport Beach.

Villa Nova uses only the finest and freshest ingredients in its entrees. The pasta is homemade as are the signature sauces; only the freshest meats and seafood are used. Executive Chef, Sonny Mergenthaler, oversees the preparation of all of the recipes. The award-winning wine list has over 800 offerings featuring one of the most extensive collections of California Cabernets and Italian Brunello and Super Tuscans in Southern California.

One of the only venues in Orange County offering live entertainment every night beginning at 8:00 p.m., Villa Nova's piano bar is the five-time winner of "Best Piano Bar in Orange County". The Piano Bar features premium spirits as well as an extensive food menu served until 12:00 a.m. in their waterfront lounge.



21 Oceanfront

949.673.2100

2100 West Oceanfront, Newport Beach

Located in a luxurious spot beside the Newport Pier, this eatery of another era boasts deep leather booths, Victorian chandeliers and a fresh rose on every table. Servers in tuxedos cater to every whim while a pianist plays old standbys, and regulars seated at the dark-wood bar take in the ocean sunset through gloriously large windows.

21 Oceanfront is a top-rated steakhouse, with an exquisite assortment of steak and seafood dishes. Seafood is the specialty, with rarely seen items like Baja abalone and Australian lobster tail topping the list. Appetizers like crab cakes in mustard sauce or steamed mussels could serve as entrees themselves, and salads include the "21 Original," a beefsteak tomato with Maui onions.

California Beach Restaurant

949.675.0575

3355 Via Lido, Suite H, Newport Beach

www.cal-beach.com

California Beach is a medium-sized locale, with extra friendly service and loud music. The people who make the sushi at the bars are loud and friendly. The employees all have wooden blocks and clap them together in a deafening rhythmic pattern. A mix of traditional Japanese cuisine plus a western style rock n' roll atmosphere is definitely worth a try, and a great place to get together with friends.



Claes Restaurant

949.376.9283

425 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach

www.claesrestaurant.com

This Laguna Beach showpiece appeals to both members of the swanky O.C. elite as well as out-of-towners looking for a perfect view. Located inside the historic Spanish Mission-style Hotel Laguna, Claes has tasteful, dark, sleek wood and a chic art-deco feel. Dramatic, oversized windows offer the feeling of literally being perched above crashing waves. Servers pay attention to every detail, offering perfect entree and wine pairings.

Executive Chef David Mack's aesthetically pleasing presentations of seafood, pasta and steak reflect a tantalizing meld of foreign influences; most present are French and Pacific Rim. The spicy shrimp cake appetizer served with a zesty cilantro salsa is a tongue-tingling delight. For a heartier appetite, the hefty teriyaki-glazed steak served alongside a sumptuous morsel of lobster tempura goes beyond the standard.

Hush Restaurant

949.497.3616

858 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach

www.hushrestaurant.com

Hush is named for its understated elegance and simplicity blending extraordinary contemporary American cuisine, an extensive world-class wine collection and a welcoming atmosphere sure to satisfy the most discriminating palates.

While located in the heart of Laguna, this restaurant feels more like a swanky Beverly Hills hot spot. As music plays softly, a fireplace blazes in the corner of the dimly lit dining area, creating a romantic atmosphere. Patio seating allows partial views of the ocean.

The lusciously decadent food is presented with flair. Impressive starters include seared Hudson Valley foie gras served with preserved kumquats, duck confit and pomegranate reduction. The recommended Chateau Lamothe-Guingnard white wine complements the dish nicely. The roasted filet tenderloin with potato-shallot cakes, spinach and a pinot-noir glaze is cooked to perfection. For dessert, a must-have is the chocolate-macadamia cake served with vanilla-bean gelato, and it can be made even better when paired with the signature Hush n' Toddy coffee drink.

Splashes Restaurant

888.869.7569

1555 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach

www.surfandsandresort.com/restaurant.html

Terraced above the beach, with waves breaking just 25 feet below, the casually elegant Splashes Restaurant boasts some of California's best views and finest cuisine.

Whether seated in the dining room or alfresco on the palm-shaded patio, American Coastal Cuisine set against a dramatic backdrop of the Pacific Ocean will be enjoyed.

At beach level lies the congenial Splashes Lounge, the ideal spot for cocktails, lighter fare and sunsets that must be seen to be believed.

Ti Amo Restaurant

949.499.5350

31727 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach
www.tiamolagunabeach.com

Ti Amo is modeled after an authentic Italian Villa with stone tablet menus, faux and fresco Artisan plastered walls, heavy fabrics, candelabras and soothing lighting. Ti Amo is very home-like with five separate dining rooms including a climate-controlled atrium with a sixty-foot pine tree towering through a glass roof, ocean views and fire place. Local Artist Martine Castoro, an accomplished fine artist displays her works in various galleries, has adorned the walls of Ti Amo with many of her original paintings.

Ti Amo conceptually is billed as offering Italian/Mediterranean Cuisine. The desire is to have a solid Italian backbone with homemade pastas and recognizable comfort foods of Italy, while offering the chef artistic freedom to create new and innovative cuisine. Thusly, many wonderful ingredients from all over the Mediterranean have been incorporated, resulting in a menu diverse in taste and rich in selection.

Nightly Chef Enrique creates six to eight fish, beef and other specials. All of his ingredients are hand chosen and delivered daily.



Restaurant 162

949.240.2000

One Ritz-Carlton Drive, Dana Point
www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/LagunaNiguel/Dining/Restaurant162

Restaurant 162, named for its location 162 feet above sea level, provides one of the most breathtaking restaurant views in the country. Dramatically perched on a cliff on the Pacific Ocean, the blue and cream-colored dining room is a soothing retreat where diners enjoy contemporary, seafood-focused California cuisine. The aesthetic dynamics include a spectacular ceiling, highlighted by three metal and crystal drop sculptures illuminated from below, plus the culinary excellence, illustrated by a sea-food buffet offered every Friday night and a champagne brunch presented every Sunday.

Restaurant 162's pastry chef, Jean-Francois (Jeff) Lehuede, is known for creating impressive sculptures of chocolate; or, try his signature dessert, Crunchy Brownie Chocolate Cake.



The Hobbit

71.997.1972

2932 East Chapman Avenue, Orange

www.hobbitrestaurant.com

The hobbit has offered a truly elegant dining experience since 1972, winning numerous awards in the process. A seven-course prix-fixe meal begins with Champagne and hors d'oeuvres in the award-winning wine cellar.

Orange Coast Magazine describes a meal at The Hobbit as being somewhat like a play in three acts –

Act 1 - Guests are invited into the wine cellar where they are handed the evening's menu and a flute of Hobbit Champagne. Hot and cold hors d'oeuvres are placed throughout the cellar to enjoy while selecting wine for dinner. The chef and sommelier are available in the cellar to help select wines from over 1000 labels.

Act 2 - Includes an appetizer, followed by a fish, fowl or light meat, and then a salad course.

Guests are then invited to enjoy "intermission" – take a walk, relax on the patios or visit the kitchen to speak with the chefs.

Act 3 - Ten to fifteen minutes later, guests are invited to return to their re-set table. A flavorful sorbet is next as a palate-cleanser. The main entrée is served complete with accompanying vegetables. Dessert arrives next, always available with an after dinner list of coffee drinks, liqueurs and fine cognacs.



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This information was compiled from reliable sources by Debbie Miller.