

The Scripps Quest
for an End to AIDS

San Diego's Food Chain
from Farm to Table

Out of the Ashes:
Himmel's New Home

SAN DIEGO

MAGAZINE

HOT new RESTAURANTS

* Where to Eat Right Now!



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SHIRT FROM NEIMAN MARCUS; DRESS AND SHOES FROM NEIMAN MARCUS; NECKLACE BY MICHA
DESIGN; DRESS AND SHOES FROM NEIMAN MARCUS; BRACELET FROM BANAWA REPUBLIC

HOT NEW RESTAURANTS



These six San Diego eateries have not only survived but thrived in the economic downturn by offering diners that little something extra—be it ultracompetitive prices, a deejay spinning background beats or a vodka list 100 bottles deep. Oh, yeah, and the food's pretty amazing, too.

BY AMY FINLEY PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL BODY

Cucina Urbana

505 Laurel Street >> 619-239-2222

Note to midtown real estate agents: Cucina Urbana's local-centric Takeout Tuesday could singlehandedly reinvigorate the condo market around this stretch of Fifth Avenue. To wit: a bottle of wine from the in-house (and retail-priced) wine shop, an artful salad (like the house-made burrata and prosciutto caprese) and a wood-fired gourmet pizza with toppings like duck confit or wild-boar sausage, all for \$30. On the other hand, the dining room is so unabashedly fun and theatrical, takeaway almost misses the point. Tracy Borkum (of Kensington Grill) dramatically reimagined her former Laurel space, creating a bright, funky, kinetic dining room that's prime for people-watching. (Think communal tables and that fantastic stairwell.) And chef Joe Magnanelli engineered a *nuovo Italiano* menu that hits sexy high notes with dishes like meaty short-rib pappardelle, braised black cod with a crunchy-tart pistachio-caper crust and locally sourced fried squash blossoms stuffed with creamy house-made ricotta. And those mini Mason jars (*vasi* in Urbana-speak) filled with such Tuscan toast toppings as chicken liver paté with shallot marmalade, or spicy ceci bean hummus? As witty and cute as those circling the bar. Word to the wise: Make reservations. Or try the recently launched lunch, when the cheerful room is equally loud and buoyant.

